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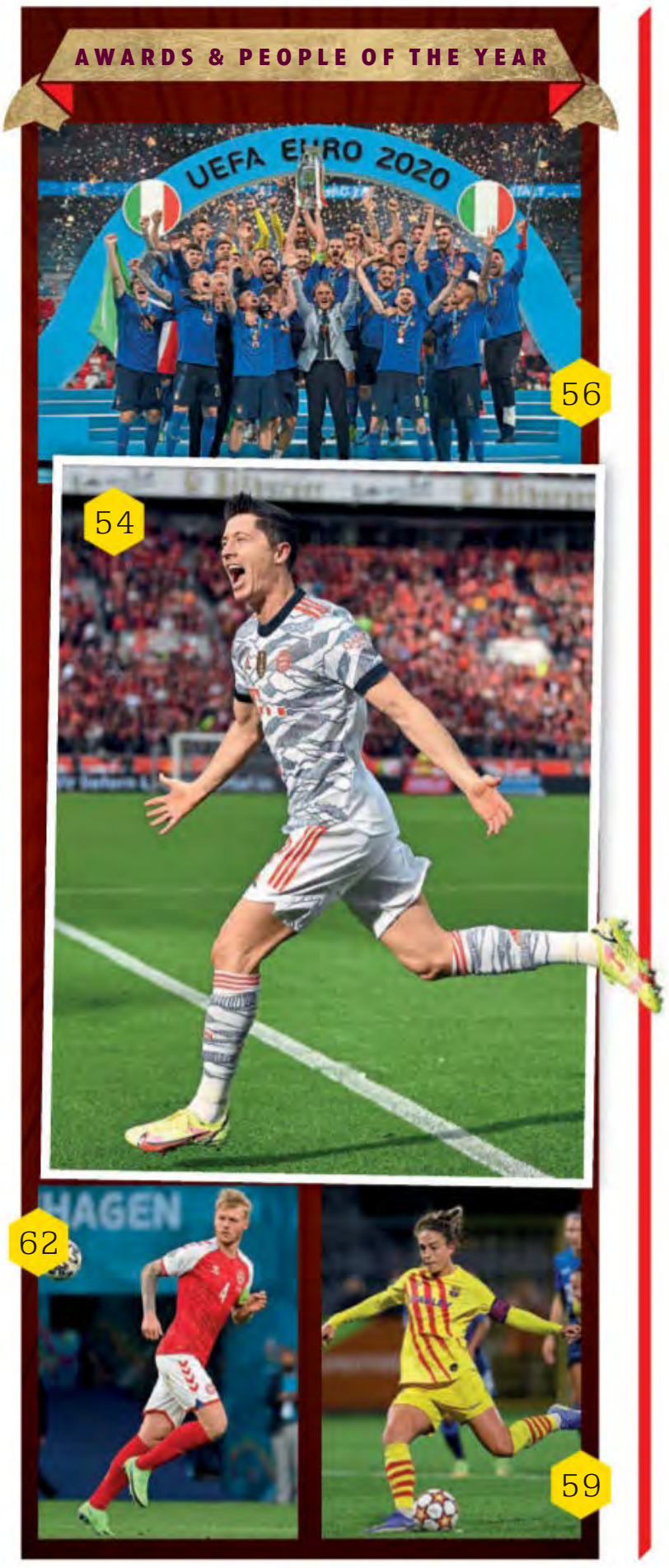

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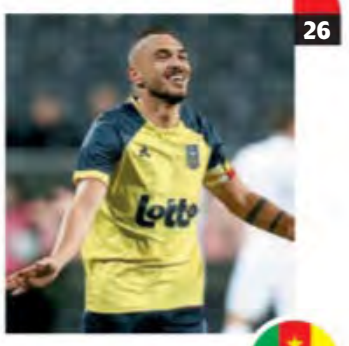

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

At the end of 2020, voting for the *World Soccer* awards was easy. Bayern Munich, spearheaded by the prolific Robert Lewandowski and expertly managed by Hansi Flick, made voting in the men's categories straightforward, as did Lyon and their coach Jean-Luc Vasseur in the women's categories, while Chelsea striker Pernille Harder won the inaugural Women's Player of the Year award.

This year, however, it was a bit more complicated – at least in the men's awards – with the Champions League, Copa America and European Championship all throwing up contenders in the minds of our panel.

Ultimately, voters felt that Lewandowski's extraordinary goalscoring record made him a worthy winner, ahead of double European champion Jorginho, or Lionel Messi, who finally ended his long wait for a major international trophy.

At the end of 2020, voting for the *World Soccer* awards was easy…this year, however, it was a bit more complicated

We'll let you discover the rest of the winners yourself by turning to page 49. In addition to the players, managers and teams of the year, we've also picked out the People of the Year for 2021, paying tribute to the individuals that made a mark on the world of football across this year.

Finally, congratulations to another award winner, Jonathan Wilson, who was recently named the Football Supporters Association's Writer of the Year for the third time. The award recognised Jonathan's status as one of European football's most authoritative observers, and we look forward to more of his incisive columns in *World Soccer* in 2022.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

Existential threat…Bury were expelled from the Football League in 2019 and placed into administration in 2020

ENGLAND

Football clubs at "genuine risk" and "need to be protected"

A government-sanctioned, fan-led review of English football has made 47 recommendations to address concerns over governance of the game.

The review, which was chaired by former Sports Minister Tracey Crouch MP, highlighted the European Super League proposal as evidence of the existential threat that many in the game currently face. "While that threat has receded – for now – the dangers facing many clubs across the country are very real," wrote Crouch. "Football clubs are not ordinary businesses. They play a critical social, civic and cultural role in their local communities."

The key recommendations of the now fully-published review include:

- *The introduction of a government-licensed Independent Regulator for English Football (IREF) to regulate finances and ownership.*
- *Establishing new owners' and directors' tests for clubs to ensure that only good custodians and qualified directors can take charge.*
- *A stamp duty-style tax on every Premier League transfer fee, to be redistributed among the lower leagues.*
- *Ensuring that supporters are properly consulted by their clubs in taking key decisions, by means of a Shadow Board.*

Elsewhere, the review also addressed the issue of Parachute Payments, whereby clubs relegated from the Premier League continue to receive money in order to help deal with the

"Sad to see that in 2021, in France as well as in England, for some, Black people have neither names nor distinct faces"

Chelsea and Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy responds to media outlets using his picture in stories about Benjamin Mendy, who has been accused and charged with six counts of rape

loss of revenue. The English Football League believes that the payments only worsen the disparity between the top flight and the rest of the football pyramid.

While the review was warmly welcomed by many, it did have its critics, most notably among Premier League board members. Steve Parish of Crystal Palace described the plans as a "huge act of self-harm", West Ham United vice-chairman Karren Brady wrote in her column in *The Sun* that Crouch "is confusing competition with fairness", and Aston Villa chief executive Christian Purslow claimed the recommendations would risk "killing the golden goose" of the Premier League. Leeds United's chief executive Angus Kinnear drew plenty of ire for comparing the plans to "Maoist collective agriculturalism".

ITALY

Serie A transfers under investigation

Italian giants Juventus are at the heart of an investigation by Italian authorities into potential financial irregularities regarding transfers. The investigation centres on *plusvalenza* (capital gains), and of the 62 deals being looked at, 42 involve the Turin club. Transfers involving Napoli, Sampdoria and Parma are also under the spotlight.

ENGLAND

Fans could have caused death at Wembley

A report into the disorder at the Euro 2020 final between England and Italy has concluded that "ticketless, drunken and drugged-up thugs" could have caused death during the chaos at Wembley.

Baroness Casey found that over 2,000 people accessed the stadium illegally due largely to 17 mass breaches of disabled access gates and fire doors, while a further 6,000 people would have stormed the ground if England had won the final. "We are genuinely lucky that there was not much more serious injury or worse," said Casey. "I am clear that the primary responsibility for what went wrong at Wembley that day lies with those who lost control of their own behaviour."

HEROES & VILLAINS

Campaigner... Malcolm Bidali
Credit: Twitter @TromsoIL

TROMSO IL

Having already taken a leading role in the protests against the Qatar 2022 World Cup, the Norwegian club made another statement highlighting their human rights concerns with their latest kit release. Designed in collaboration with Amnesty International, the new shirt is the first in the world to feature a QR code that, when scanned, will direct users to a website that details the working conditions in Qatar. Malcolm Bidali, a former migrant worker who was arrested in Qatar, helped promote the shirt.

BRENTFORD

The Premier League club have announced that they will be keeping this season's home kit for another year. The practice of releasing new strips every season has been widely criticised, for its impact on both the environment and fans' pockets. "Fans have told us that they would be in favour of the savings," said club CEO Jon Varney. The hope is that Brentford's decision will set a new trend among other clubs.

SERBIA

As if their dramatic late win against Portugal wasn't heroic enough, Serbia's players then donated their entire win bonus to charity. Before the game, Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic promised the players €1m if they secured their place in Qatar but, after Aleksandar Mitrovic's 90th-minute winner, the players chose instead to send the money to help treat sick children.

LEAM RICHARDSON

The Wigan manager was widely praised for saving one of his players' lives after performing CPR during training. After striker Charlie Wyke suffered a cardiac arrest, Richardson acted quickly, allowing club doctor Jonathan Tobin (who also helped resuscitate Fabrice Muamba in 2012) to fully resuscitate the 28-year-old. After Euro 2020, charity Resuscitation Council UK urged people to learn how to perform CPR.

FPF

The Portuguese Football Federation came under fire after a league match between Belenenses and Benfica descended into complete farce. Despite a COVID outbreak for the hosts that forced them to field just nine players, including goalkeeper Joao Monteiro in midfield, no FPF decision was forthcoming on a postponement. After Benfica had taken a 7-0 half-time lead, the match was abandoned in the second half as injuries reduced Belenenses to six players.

MARKUS ANFANG

The German resigned from his role as Werder Bremen coach after allegations he used a forged coronavirus vaccination certificate. In an official statement released by the club, Anfang said: "Because of the extreme stress caused to the club, the team, my family and myself, I have decided to immediately step down from my role."

MOHAMED ABOUTRIKA

Kick It Out condemned Qatari broadcasters beIN Sport after pundit Aboutrika embarked on a homophobic tirade about the Premier League's Rainbow Laces campaign, describing homosexuality as "against human nature." beIN insisted in a statement that they "represent, champion and support people, causes and interests of every single background, language and cultural heritage."

LYON FANS

The Ligue 1 club have been forced to install protective nets around the stadium after Marseille's Dimitri Payet was struck on the head by home fans in November, after which the game was abandoned. Lyon installed the netting at the Groupama Stadium "reluctantly" in order to protect players. Payet was also at the centre of a pitch invasion at Nice, and has met with fans of his own club to remind them of the costs of throwing projectiles at players.

Struck down... Marseille's Payet

"We wish to state categorically that the allegations are frivolous, baseless and lack merit…we call on the South African FA to responsibly accept defeat"

Ghana's FA responds to calls from South Africa to replay their 2022 World Cup qualifier

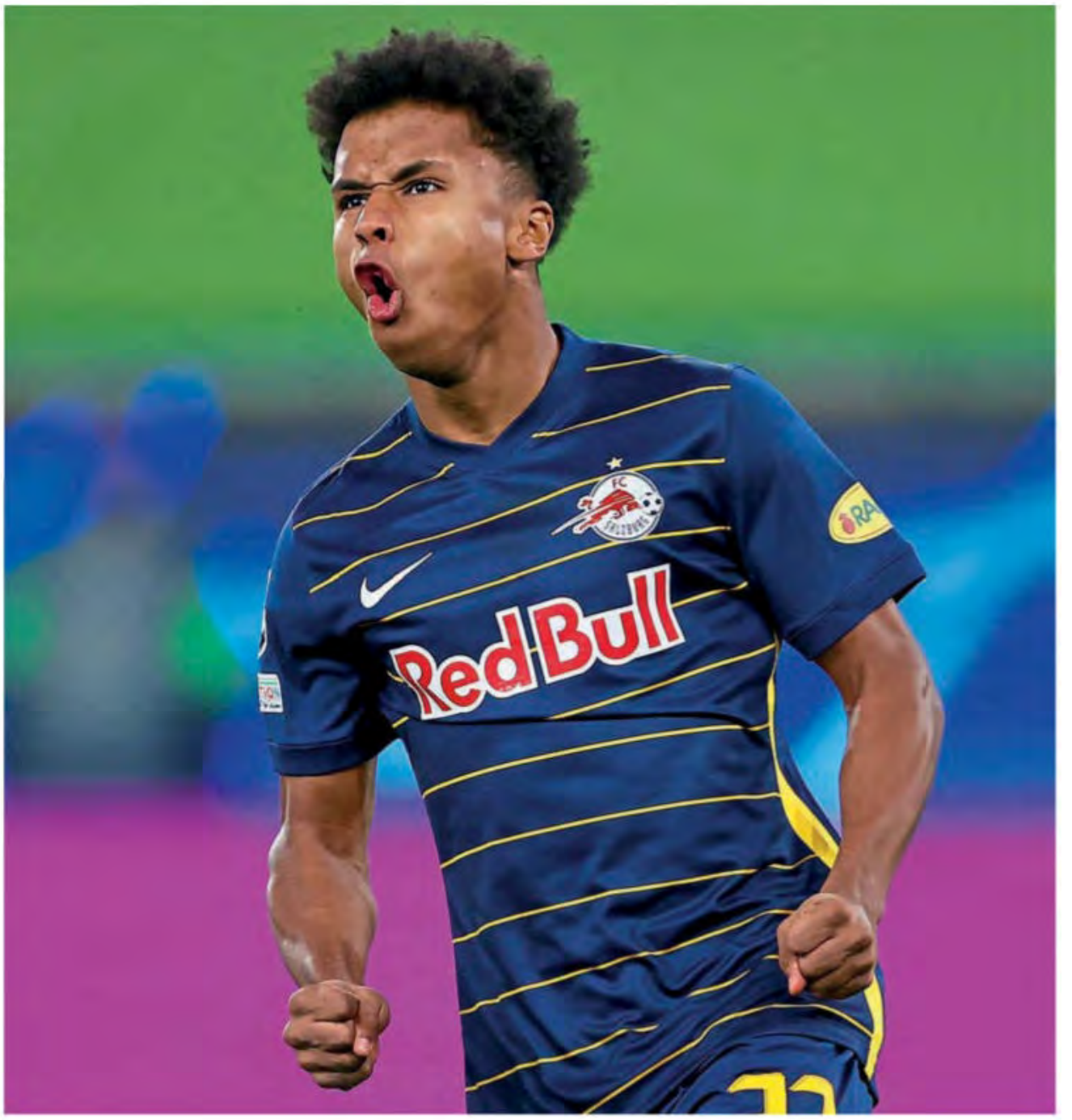
Karim ADEYEMI

(Red Bull Salzburg)

For the second year in a row, the January transfer window rolls around with a Red Bull Salzburg player at the top of the shopping lists of Europe's best clubs. In 2021 it was Dominik Szoboszlai, who joined RB Leipzig for €25 million; this time it looks set to be their young forward, Karim Adeyemi.

Unsurprisingly, Salzburg ended 2021 with a comfortable lead at the top of the Austrian Bundesliga, with Adeyemi scoring 11 goals in 16 league games, but more impressively he also had a major impact on the Champions League. The 19-year-old scored three group-stage goals as Salzburg advanced to the knockout stages for the first time in their history, and that hasn't gone unnoticed.

After making his Germany debut in September, a return to his home country seems likely, despite interest from the Premier League and Barcelona.



Felix AFENA-GYAN
(Roma)
The 18-year-old scored a brace on his Serie A debut after coming off the bench late on, and was rewarded with an €800 pair of trainers from Jose Mourinho.

Jon Dahl TOMASSON
(Malmo)
The former Denmark, Feyenoord, Milan and Newcastle United striker guided Swedish giants Malmo to their second Allsvenskan title in a row – pipping AIK on goal difference.

Ethan MBAPPE
(Paris Saint-Germain)
Kylian's younger brother is only 14, yet he has already been called up for the France Under-16 squad. Ethan is a central midfielder for PSG Under-17s.

Gianluca SCAMACCA
(Sassuolo)
In Italy, the 22-year-old striker is being discussed as a potential World Cup saviour ahead of the play-offs in March after impressing for Sassuolo.

Patrik SCHICK
(Bayer Leverkusen)
The Czech Republic striker had a hand in five of Leverkusen's goals in their 7-1 demolition of Greuther Furth, assisting one before half-time then scoring four second-half goals.

HULK
(Atletico Mineiro)
The 35-year-old ended the Brazilian league season as the top scorer with 19 goals, firing Atletico to the league title alongside strike partner Diego Costa.

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Southgate the right man for the England job

However you look at it – tournament success, thrilling nights to remember, bald statistics, personal dignity – Gareth Southgate already stands high as one of the most admirable and accomplished managers in the history of the England national football team. The only thing missing is a trophy.

Yet, as we enter the year of the 2022 World Cup, there are still many critics who prefer to doubt the credentials of Southgate. They say he is too cautious, and that his achievement of reaching the semi-final and final of the last two major tournaments was more about lucky pathways than high-class football.

It seems to me absurd. Do people not remember the sterility of the Fabio Capello team, the waste of the golden generation under Sven-Goran Eriksson, the debacle of losing to Iceland, the failure even to qualify for tournaments under several of his predecessors?

Southgate, who thoroughly deserves his contract extension until December 2024, has helped transform England into genuine trophy contenders; a team that rivals fear, a team with confidence, talent, flair and tactical balance.

It is that final element that is most crucial. The criticism of excessive caution is made because his preferred system has developed into 3-4-3, one that maximises defensive strength ahead of selecting extra players from the myriad of high-class forwards England possess.

There have been two issues: the lack of quality at centre-back and an absence of top-class holding midfielders. For some years it was the latter problem that most troubled Southgate. He would acknowledge it openly in press briefings, and ponder it endlessly in private with his coaches and advisors.

Time and good fortune appear to have resolved this conundrum, with the maturing excellence of Declan Rice and Jude Bellingham. They are emerging superstars, and Bellingham's style on the ball and ability to play box-to-box adds an extra dimension. With Kalvin Phillips and Jordan Henderson excellent options too, England are now blessed in this crucial area of the modern game.

Central defence is another matter. This is the one fundamental weakness, which is surely why Southgate has been opting for 3-4-3 with a couple of flying wing-backs on the flanks. It is a way to play, it can be a way to win tournaments, but is also means the loss of a forward, which is more than a pity when England have so many to choose from. Mason Mount or Phil Foden, but not both? The frustration is obvious.

An unhappy truth, however, is that Harry Maguire and John Stones, the two-man central defensive partnership tried most by Southgate, was not reliable enough for major international matches. He could not afford such a gamble so his choice of 3-4-3 is common sense.

Could it be otherwise? Perhaps so. All international managers are at the mercy of swings of fortune in club football, and what they hope for is high-class players emerging to solve their headaches. It happened with Rice and Bellingham – and the ten months between now and the World Cup is time enough for a couple of central defenders of the requisite ability to materialise and give Southgate the option of a back four.

An optimist can see several young men who might: Fikayo Tomori (24), Trevoh Chalobah (22), Joe Gomez (24), and Marc Guehi (21), each of whom won tournaments as players with England junior teams, and who all possess high potential and good technique.

Tomori is the most likely, enjoying a standout season at the heart of Milan's defence as they challenge for the Serie A title. Italian observers are astonished he isn't an England regular already.

Chalobah has won the confidence of Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel, which is no easy task. The problem for Gomez is overcoming a long-term knee injury, but his talent is plain if he can recover a starting position for Liverpool.

Guehi is the outsider of these four, but maybe the best of them all, thriving in the spotlight at Crystal Palace under the command of Patrick Vieira.

What all these young players should know is that Gareth Southgate will have no hesitation throwing them into the England side if they can convince him they are good enough. In fact, he would do so with the greatest enthusiasm. It could make the difference between England winning the World Cup or not.

Two more years... Southgate extended his England contract in November

> Southgate has helped transform England into genuine trophy contenders; a team that rivals fear

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Qatar 2022 poses problems for the calendar

Traditionally, professional football stops around most of the planet while the World Cup is being staged. No one objects, largely because it's generally close season in the northern hemisphere.

Qatar 2022 will be different and difficult because it will not sit in the convenient European summer. The complications are clear from confirmation from the Premier League and the Football League of how next season's schedule will be rearranged to squeeze in the historic first winter finals in the Gulf.

England's clubs provide a larger percentage of players to a World Cup than any other country, so it may be the only nation in which both the top two divisions are halted rather than just the primary competition.

The Premier League season will start on August 6 – one or two weeks earlier than usual – and the final round of pre-finals matches will be staged on Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13. The opening match of the finals, with players still potentially nursing their injuries, is on November 21 and the final on Sunday, December 18. The Premier League then resumes eight days later on Boxing Day.

Obviously the more successful a national team is, the less time will be available for their stars to fly back, rest and refresh before being thrown back into the holiday hurly-burly.

England is alone, of course, in staging a busy Christmas/New Year holiday schedule. Home-based stars from Spain, Italy, Portugal, France and Germany will have at least an extra week or more to say hello to their families before kicking off their club duties – a factor that may well have a big influence on which clubs progress to the closing stages of the European club competitions.

One intriguing point is that many foreign players in the top five leagues will have departed the World Cup up to a month before their leagues are due to resume. Inevitably, some major clubs will want to bring one or more matches forward into the gap weeks. FIFA might frown on that but any domestic broadcaster would doubtless be delighted.

Qatar 2022... the World Cup's official emblem

> [A winter World Cup] was eventually approved by FIFA with comparatively little complaint from the major European leagues. Perhaps, at the time, they thought the Qatar World Cup was too far into the distance to be of concern

The Premier League's final round of matches will be played on May 28 2023, when all games will kick off simultaneously as usual.

As for the Football League, all its three divisions will begin next season on the weekend of Saturday, July 30 with the second-tier Championship stopping for its break on November 13. Competition resumes on December 9 after the World Cup's round of 16.

Leagues One and Two – the third and fourth tier of the English professional game – will carry on as normal throughout the World Cup. That could be good news for club attendances with no competition from the Premier League. However individual matches could be postponed due to international World Cup call-ups.

The final round of the regular EFL campaign is set for the weekend of Saturday, May 6 with the promotion play-off finals on May 27-29.

Incidentally, the fourth round of the League Cup will be scheduled

for the week between the World Cup final and the Premier League's resumption on Boxing Day. So it may be that any Premier League clubs will have to put out weakened teams but then, they mostly do this anyway at that stage in the competition.

All clear?

When Qatar bid for the World Cup it placed great emphasis on the potential of air-cooled stadia to combat the intense heat of summer temperatures in the Gulf. This writer attended a match in the Al Sadd stadium with the coolers working. A vision was created of vast swathes of land devoted to solar panels to generate the essential energy.

Michel Platini, then-president of UEFA and a former World Cup star, was vociferous in demanding a winter World Cup for the sake of the players. This was eventually approved by FIFA and with comparatively little complaint from the major European leagues. Perhaps, at the time, they thought the Qatar World Cup was too far into the distance to be of concern.

Some long-time critics of the Qatar award and the scandal-scarred selection process probably hoped that the Gulf state would be stripped of the finals for one reason or another and then the summer/winter issue would not arise.

This outcome was never realistic once contracts had been signed. So now Qatar 2022 is looming on football's horizon, bringing the World Cup to the Middle East for the first time.

Top-flight clubs in Europe may worry that fans will lose the habit of attending matches but such concerns have been eased by the eagerness of spectators to return to the stadia after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Indeed, the sport's ability to shuffle and shift in response to the pandemic suggests that it can and will negotiate the Qatar World Cup disruption far more efficiently than critics fear.

Disquiet has also been voiced about the on-going loyalty of disrupted broadcasters and sponsors. Here, at least, reassurance exists in Qatar's fixture shift being a one-off event. The World Cup finals will be back to June/July in 2026 and the potential European and South American bidders for 2030 will all be sticking to the traditional window. Even a possible Chinese hosting in 2034 would follow suit.

Controversy is nothing new for the Qataris. It has surrounded the tournament ever since the famous (or infamous) votes by the FIFA executive committee in December 2010, which saw Russia awarded 2018, and Qatar beating Australia, Japan, South Korea and the United States to land 2022.

Qatar has ridden fierce international pressure over the treatment and safety standards for the thousands of migrant workers building the gas and oil-rich state. The *kafala* system of tied contracts was abolished, officially at least, and improved rules and regulations were enacted for stadium construction. These did not apply to workers on supportive infrastructural projects but enough progress was achieved to satisfy international labour organisations.

Human rights, including particularly LGBTQ+ concerns, is another matter. Adelaide United's Josh Cavallo – the only openly gay footballer at a top-flight club in the world – has said he would be "fearful" of playing at the tournament.

Players from Germany, the Netherlands and Norway all staged pre-match T-shirt protests over human rights concerns while stars of several other countries, including England, will discuss whether to follow suit. Amnesty International will ensure the issue plays right up to the opening match, as in Russia in 2018.

Gareth Southgate, diplomatically cautious as ever in straying beyond his managerial comfort zone, says: "I've been in some conversations as part of an FA delegation with people from Qatar, trying to get a better understanding of the situation. We have to be certain on who we should be speaking to and exactly what issues are important.

"We will be representing the country in a foreign land so we have to be 100 per cent sure of our facts. There are clear cultural differences between the nations and we, as a nation, do a lot of business with Qatar. We have to take the time to educate ourselves and if there are areas we can highlight and help, clearly we will do that."

By then Southgate – like Didier Deschamps, Hansi Flick, Louis van Gaal and Co. – will have other pressing priorities, while their players' clubs balance any reflected glory against impatience to get back down to business once the circus has left town.

Protests...Germany have been among the teams to object to Qatar's hosting of the tournament

BOOKS THIS MONTH

FIT & PROPER PEOPLE
By Martin Calladine and James Cave (Pitch Publishing, £12.99)

In 2019, an app called OwnaFC hit the market promising football fans the chance to buy and run their own club. Just a few months later it collapsed, leaving customers hundreds of thousands of pounds out of pocket. *Fit and Proper People* tells the story of the business that was supposed to revolutionise the game, the people who lost out and the consequences suffered by those who tried to hold OwnaFC to account.

TAXI FOR KIEV
By Steve Deponeo (Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

Taxi for Kiev: Six Strangers, Six Borders, Six Days is the true and uncensored story of six lads from very different backgrounds who had never met before but found kinship in a common goal: to get to Kiev for the 2019 Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid. They embarked on a 3,500-mile taxi trip that took them to many places – physically, mentally and emotionally. It is one man's account of that unforgettable six-day adventure – with shocks, tears and laughs aplenty.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Lukaku and Chelsea still waiting to click ahead of a key month in the Premier League title race

For Chelsea, and the Premier League title race, January looks a vital month, with games against Liverpool and Manchester City followed by a clash with Antonio Conte's Tottenham. The assumption in the early weeks of the season was that it was Chelsea who would provide the main challenge to the defending champions Manchester City: a Champions League-winning team plus Romelu Lukaku seemed a winning formula. But although Chelsea have started well, it hasn't quite worked out like that.

There was a clear shift as soon as Thomas Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard in January 2021. Chelsea conceded just 13 goals in 19 Premier League games under him last season as opposed to 23 in the first 19. They became much better at combatting opposition set plays and, other than that freakish 5-2 defeat to West Bromwich Albion, had a midfield structure that enabled them to prevent counter-attacks.

And they were flexible: Tuchel is naturally inclined to playing in transition, but he is not such an advocate of the high press as the man he succeeded at both Mainz and Borussia Dortmund, Jurgen Klopp. In the Champions League semi-final against Real Madrid, they were able to sit deep and, at times, play more of a possession-based game.

The only issue was goals: only 23 scored in that final half of the Premier League season. In part that was down to Timo Werner's astonishing profligacy – his 78 goals across four Bundesliga seasons for RB Leipzig look weirdly anachronistic now, and perhaps hint at a wider sense that there is a significant step in quality from the Bundesliga to the Premier League – but it was also because of a lack of creativity, in part down to a cautiousness in possession through midfield. The addition of Lukaku seemed an easy solution: he had, after all, scored 24 league goals for Internazionale the previous season, as opposed to Werner's return of just six.

Not clicking... Lukaku's second spell at Stamford Bridge hasn't gone to plan

> Troublingly, Chelsea probably looked better in those games in late October and early November in which Lukaku was absent with an ankle injury

And Lukaku began well. But as it turns out, bullying Arsenal and stealing a couple of goals against Aston Villa isn't necessarily replicable across the season as a whole. More troublingly, Chelsea probably looked better in those games in late October and early November in which Lukaku was absent with an ankle injury – albeit against weaker opposition and in spite of the fact they somehow didn't beat Burnley despite a barrage of early pressure. The use of Kai Havertz as a false nine, as he played in the Champions League final, seemed to give them a greater flexibility and fluidity.

It is, of course, still early. Nobody is suggesting that Lukaku is a failure or that his second spell at Chelsea will be a flop. But what is clear is that football is not as simple as taking a

decent team that sometimes struggles to score and adding a prolific striker.

"If you have a centre-forward like that, you need to use him and I don't think Chelsea have quite figured out how to use him yet," Conte, his manager at Inter, said after Chelsea's narrow 1-0 defeat to Juventus in the Champions League at the end of September. "Last season, they didn't have a proper centre-forward, so they rotated positions, whereas Romelu is a real reference point in attack. He is a very specific striker. Bringing Lukaku into the box, he is dangerous. However, when he starts from midfield, he is incredibly quick. It is very difficult to find a player who is both a target man but can also run from midfield."

Yet Lukaku, as he has shown regularly at international level, is also adept at pulling away from central areas, at not being that reference point. For Belgium, he often pulls out to the right, creating space for Kevin De Bruyne. In theory, with Chelsea usually playing two inside-forwards (and they look better in a 3-4-3 than a 3-5-2 that was tried for a time earlier this season), Lukaku should be able to create space for them, as well as for the wing-backs who provide so much of Chelsea's attacking threat at the moment, while also offering the option to go more direct if need be. And Tuchel is certainly not averse to going direct; his criticism after that Juventus defeat was that his side had played too much like a possession team.

Lukaku should work at Chelsea, but in a world in which so many elite clubs seems obsessed by signing celebrities, by servicing their own content production machines rather than putting together teams that work on the pitch, there is something almost consoling about the fact that even a player as intelligent and versatile as Lukaku, and a manager as clear-sighted as Tuchel take time to get it right. Football should not yield too readily to money, even when it is backed by logic.

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Aspas...the Celta ace gets injured while scoring

1 TACTICAL BOOKING?

Iago Aspas turned 34 at the start of this season, but in Celta Vigo's recent clash with Valencia, it appeared he's still as sharp as ever – in more ways than one. After giving his side the lead with a smart stepover and finish, he appeared to sustain an injury from a clash with a Valencia defender. Knowing that the knock would likely rule him out of action – later tapping his groin area while lying down injured – the striker whipped his shirt off in "celebration", and duly collected his fifth yellow card of the season. He then served his suspension in Celta's next game, while recovering from his injury.

2 EDEN PROJECT

Ambition is always a good thing in football, but the owners of Westerlo in Belgium's second tier may have set their sights a little too high by declaring their interest in Real Madrid's Eden Hazard. "I think I can consider [him] as a friend. I met him when he was at Lille and he promised that one day he would play for Fenerbahce," the club's Turkish vice-president, Hasan Cetinkaya told *Voetbalkrant*. "Westerlo will be more difficult, but you never know." In this case, perhaps we do know.

3 TOUGH JOURNEY

This season's Coupe de France threw up another remarkable long-haul trip for one of the teams involved. Ten-time champions of Tahiti, AS Venus, are based in French Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean, yet qualified for the French Cup by winning the Tahiti Cup earlier this year. Their reward was a 20,000-mile round trip to southwest France to face fourth-tier side Trelissac FC. Although they suffered a 2-0 defeat, their coach Samuel Garcia took the positives: "The trip has been a very positive experience for the whole team and club," he said. "We showed really good form in this match against a team which plays in a higher division than us." Incidentally, in 2015 Trelissac were on the other side of such a draw, as they endured a 10,500-mile trip to face AS Magenta in New Caledonia.

4 DREADFUL DIVING: PART ONE

It is hardly rare to see footballers exaggerate contact during the heat of battle in the hope of getting your opponent sent off. That was the thinking of Viking goalkeeper Patrik Gunnarsson, after getting involved in a scuffle during the Norwegian top-flight clash with Kristiansund. After being shoved in the chest, Gunnarsson dropped to the ground clutching his face, and the referee duly whipped out a red card for the offender. The problem was, the person who had pushed him was Gunnarsson's own team-mate, David Brekalo. Fortunately for the goalkeeper, his team were able to hold onto their 3-2 lead.

5 DREADFUL DIVING: PART TWO

Gunnarsson wasn't the only player to be guilty of some awful playacting recently – the goalkeeper was beaten to the award of worst dive by Palmeiras forward Deyverson. The Brazilian was the hero for his team after scoring the winner in the Copa Libertadores final, but that shouldn't exonerate him from his attempts to get somebody else sent off – in this case, the referee. After feeling a pat on the back, Deyverson dropped to the ground as if he'd been shot, before realising that his assailant was Nestor Pitana, and the weapon was a whistle. Somehow, he escaped the incident without being booked for simulation.

Deyverson... or Diver-son?

Tom SAINTFIET
GUEST COLUMNIST

Unknown players will decide AFCON 2021

The Gambia's coach believes that lesser known stars could stand out in January's tournament in Cameroon

The big stars of previous AFCONs have not always been the ones that you predict. Everyone in Europe will expect the big names like Riyad Mahrez, Sadio Mane and Mo Salah to be the stars, but that isn't always the case.

Milan's Ismael Bennacer was still playing for Empoli when he was Player of the Tournament in Algeria's 2019 win. When Cameroon won back-to-back AFCONs in 2000 and 2002, their star man Samuel Eto'o won neither the best player nor top scorer awards. Ivory Coast had to wait until 2015 to win, when all-time record scorer Didier Drogba had retired.

Sometimes a new star can emerge alongside one of the big players, and that new star doesn't necessarily have to be young.

Mahrez will be influential for Algeria but it's good to see Islam Slimani starting regularly again too. Slimani is 33 now and was not always in the team when Djamel Belmadi first took charge in 2018, but now he is Algeria's all-time record goalscorer. He should combine well with Baghdad Bounedjah, who is playing for Al Sadd, and is one of my favourite players at the tournament.

Wilfred Ndidi and Kelechi Iheanacho will be expected to do well for Nigeria, but I think that Ahmed Musa – who is 29 and in Turkey now with Fatih Karagumruk – is very interesting.

For Tunisia, Wahbi Khazri is an intelligent and brilliant player and he can decide a game by himself.

Sebastian Haller did not fare so well in England with West Ham United but is scoring regularly for Ajax and could do well for Ivory Coast.

Big things will be expected from Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang at Gabon and he could combine well with Denis Bouanga, who is in good form on the wing for Saint-Etienne.

Among the younger generation, Ghana have some very good players. Kamaldeen Sulemana is only 19 years old and playing very well in midfield for Rennes in France. Mohammed Kudus is another midfielder and, like Sulemana, came out of the Right to Dream academy in Ghana and is also doing well for Ajax. I don't think Ghana will win, but these two young players could be stars.

But the big star might not be an outfielder: there are some very strong goalkeepers at this AFCON. Mane will be expected to shine for Senegal, but Edouard Mendy is in fantastic form for Chelsea. The Moroccan goalkeeper Yassine Bounou (known as Bono), who plays for Sevilla, is very interesting, and Andre Onana is playing well again for Cameroon after a year out for a doping ban.

Ivory Coast had to wait until 2015 to win, when all-time record scorer Didier Drogba had retired

Outside of the big countries, there could be a breakout star if their team does well and has a good run. Burkina Faso reached the final in 2013 and the semi-finals in 2017, and Lassina Traore could be a real star if they have a good run again. He will turn 21 during the tournament but is already playing at a top level in Europe with Shakhtar Donetsk.

Ibrahima Kone... the Sarpsborg forward has hit eight goals in six games for Mali

Another player that looks very promising is Ibrahima Kone for Mali. He is only playing for Sarpsborg in Norway, but has scored five goals in five World Cup qualifying games. He could be a real surprise if Mali reach the last eight.

Ben Nabouhane will also be vital for the Comoros as he has experience playing at the top level for Red Star Belgrade, while at my team, Ablie Jallow – who plays for Seraing in Belgium on loan from Ligue 1 side Metz – is a very skilful player and an important part of our side.

Everything will be decided for the players on how far their teams go: anyone in a team that gets knocked out before the quarter-finals is unlikely to get noticed.

I think it will be the players who are not so well known in Europe who will decide the latest Africa Cup of Nations.

Tom Saintfiet was speaking to Steve Menary

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

SEASON RANKINGS
Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Edouard Mendy (Chelsea)	9
Thibaut Courtois (Real Madrid)	5
Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich)	5
David Ospina (Napoli)	4
Ederson (Manchester City)	3
Alisson (Liverpool)	2
Jan Oblak (Atletico Madrid)	2
Aaron Ramsdale (Arsenal)	2
Oliver Baumann (Hoffenheim)	1
Bono (Sevilla)	1
Gianluigi Donnarumma (PSG)	1
Mark Flekken (Freiburg)	1
Alfred Gomis (Rennes)	1
Mike Maignan (Milan)	1
Maty Ryan (Real Sociedad)	1

DEFENDERS

Kalidou Koulibaly (Napoli)	17
Joao Cancelo (Manchester City)	14
Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool)	10
Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool)	9
Marquinhos (PSG)	9
Ruben Dias (Manchester City)	8
Achraf Hakimi (PSG)	8
Reece James (Chelsea)	7
Antonio Rudiger (Chelsea)	7
Alphonso Davies (Bayern Munich)	6
Thiago Silva (Chelsea)	5
David Alaba (Real Madrid)	4
Ben Chilwell (Chelsea)	4
Andy Robertson (Liverpool)	4
Giovanni Di Lorenzo (Napoli)	3
Marcos Alonso (Chelsea)	2
Davide Calabria (Milan)	2
Theo Hernandez (Milan)	2
Joel Matip (Liverpool)	2
Eder Militao (Real Madrid)	2
Milan Skriniar (Internazionale)	2
Dayot Upamecano (Bayern Munich)	2
Kyle Walker (Manchester City)	2
Cesar Azpilicueta (Chelsea)	1
Jerome Boateng (Lyon)	1
Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus)	1
Andreas Christensen (Chelsea)	1
Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United)	1
Stefan de Vrij (Internazionale)	1
Aritz Elustondo (Real Sociedad)	1
Jeremie Frimpong (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Grimaldo (Benfica)	1
Raphael Guerreiro (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Gonzalo Inacio (Sporting)	1
Philipp Lienhart (Freiburg)	1
Lisandro Martinez (Ajax)	1
Ferland Mendy (Real Madrid)	1
Jesus Navas (Sevilla)	1
Jose Luis Palomino (Atalanta)	1
Benjamin Pavard (Bayern Munich)	1
Mario Rui (Napoli)	1
Jean-Clair Todibo (Nice)	1
Rafael Toloi (Atalanta)	1
Takehiro Tomiyasu (Arsenal)	1
Lucas Verissimo (Benfica)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich)	12
Nicolo Barella (Internazionale)	7
Bernardo Silva (Manchester City)	7
Jorginho (Chelsea)	6
Idrissa Gueye (PSG)	5
Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City)	4
Mikel Merino (Real Sociedad)	4
Phil Foden (Manchester City)	3
Leon Goretzka (Bayern Munich)	3
Toni Kroos (Real Madrid)	3
Mason Mount (Chelsea)	3
Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich)	3
Piotr Zielinski (Napoli)	3
Hakan Calhanoglu (Internazionale)	2
Casemiro (Real Madrid)	2
Fabian (Napoli)	2
Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United)	2
N'Golo Kante (Chelsea)	2
Franck Kessie (Milan)	2
Luka Modric (Real Madrid)	2
Christopher Nkunku (RB Leipzig)	2
Declan Rice (West Ham United)	2
Thiago (Liverpool)	2
Sandro Tonali (Milan)	2
Florian Wirtz (Bayer Leverkusen)	2
Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (Napoli)	2
Houssem Aouar (Lyon)	1
Jude Bellingham (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Ismael Bennacer (Milan)	1
Steven Berghuis (Ajax)	1
Marcelo Brozovic (Internazionale)	1
Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City)	1
Sergio Busquets (Barcelona)	1
Pedro Goncalves (Sporting)	1
Kai Havertz (Chelsea)	1
Ander Herrera (PSG)	1
Lovro Majer (Rennes)	1
Jamal Musiala (Bayern Munich)	1
Mario Pasalic (Atalanta)	1
Dimitri Payet (Marseille)	1
Paul Pogba (Manchester United)	1
Rodri (Manchester City)	1
Bukayo Saka (Arsenal)	1
Youri Tielemans (Leicester City)	1
Hans Vanaken (Club Brugge)	1
Axel Witsel (Borussia Dortmund)	1

FORWARDS

Robert Lewandowski (Bayern Munich)	28
Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)	25
Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid)	12
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	10
Erling Haaland (Borussia Dortmund)	7
Kylian Mbappe (PSG)	5
Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)	5
Sebastien Haller (Ajax)	4
Victor Osimhen (Napoli)	4
Leroy Sane (Bayern Munich)	4
Karim Adeyemi (Red Bull Salzburg)	2
Luis Diaz (Porto)	2
Diogo Jota (Liverpool)	2
Romelu Lukaku (Chelsea)	2
Lionel Messi (PSG)	2
Giovanni Simeone (Verona)	2
Dusan Vlahovic (Fiorentina)	2
Duvan Zapata (Atalanta)	2
Memphis Depay (Barcelona)	1
Breel Embolo (B. M'gladbach)	1
Serge Gnabry (Bayern Munich)	1
Ciro Immobile (Lazio)	1
Lorenzo Insigne (Napoli)	1
Alexander Isak (Real Sociedad)	1
Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund)	1

ESM MEMBERS: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *Sport Express* (Russia), *Sport/Foot* (Belgium), *De Telegraaf* (Netherlands), *TIPS Bladet* (Denmark), *ElfVoetbal* (Netherlands), *World Soccer* (England)

"I'm even more handsome now than when I left! The last time that I took this microphone, it was to say that I didn't know when my dream would end. I'm here again, still living the dream"

Dani Alves announces his return to the Nou Camp

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

Interim manager... Ralf Rangnick

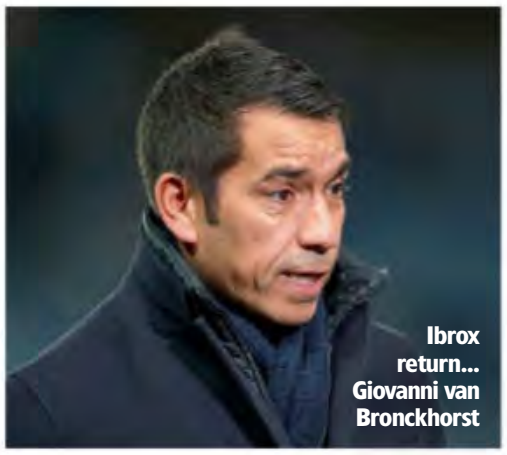
EUROPE

DANI ALVES became Barcelona's first signing under new manager Xavi, returning to the club that he left in 2016 having terminated his contract at Sao Paulo in September.

Manchester United appointed **RALF RANGNICK** as their interim manager until the end of the season following Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's exit, after which he will continue in a consultancy role. Elsewhere, Norwich City appointed **DEAN SMITH** to replace Daniel Farke.

Southampton responded to their goalkeeping injury crisis by signing free agent **WILLY CABALLERO**.

In the Football League, **PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM** was hired by Sheffield United to replace Slavisa Jokanovic, and Barnsley hired former Sweden Under-21 coach **POYA ASBAGHI**. Ex-England striker **ANDY CARROLL** joined Reading as a free agent, while Sheffield Wednesday signed former Cardiff City and Middlesbrough winger **NATHANIEL MENDEZ-LAING**.



Ibrox return... Giovanni van Bronckhorst

Rangers appointed their former Dutch left-back **GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST** as manager after the departure of Steven Gerrard.

Liverpool hired former Brazil international **CLAUDIO TAFFAREL** as goalkeeping coach.

TORE-ANDRE FLO announced that he will leave his role as loan player technical coach at Chelsea to take charge of Norwegian second-tier side Sogndal.

Belgian side Oostende swooped for USA full-back **KYLE DUNCAN** from New York Red Bulls.

TAYFUN KORKUT took charge of Bundesliga side Hertha Berlin, replacing Pal Dardai. In Belgium, Cercle Brugge appointed **DOMINIK THALHAMMER** to replace Yves Vanderhaeghe.

In the Netherlands, Eredivisie strugglers PEC Zwolle appointed **DICK SCHREUDER** as head coach. Elsewhere, Fortuna Sittard snapped up Greece midfielder **ANDREAS SAMARIS** after his summer release from Benfica.

Former Portugal midfielder **PETIT** returned to Boavista, the club where he began his managerial career in 2012. Elsewhere, Moreirense appointed **LITO VIDIGAL** to replace Joao Henriques, and Maritimo hired **VASCO SEABRA** to replace Julio Velazquez.

AFRICA

ROGER LEMERRE, the man who guided France to Euro 2000 glory, took charge of Tunisian side Etoile du Sahel for the third time in his career, at the age of 80.

CONCACAF

In MLS, Vancouver Whitecaps appointed **VANNI SARTINI**, Chicago Fire hired **EZRA HENDRICKSON**, and **NICO ESTEVEZ** left his role as USA's assistant manager to take charge of FC Dallas, swapping jobs with **LUCHI GONZALEZ**.

SOUTH AMERICA

JAVIER MASCHERANO took his first steps in coaching as manager of Argentina's Under-20 team.

Former Argentina and Colombia boss **JOSE PEKERMAN** was appointed the new manager of Venezuela.

ASIA

Li Tie was replaced as China manager by his fellow former international **LI XIAOPENG**, with the team facing an uphill battle to reach the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

A-League Men side Western Sydney Wanderers signed free agent **JACK RODWELL**, who was released by Sheffield United in the summer.

Fresh start...Jack Rodwell

Comeback... Christian Eriksen

Eriksen bids to restart career

With his future at Internazionale highly in doubt, Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen has returned to former club Odense to train.

After suffering a cardiac arrest at Euro 2020, the 29-year-old was fitted with an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD), which helps monitor and maintain his heart rhythm. Under Italian Football Federation rules, he is unable to play in Italy while wearing the ICD.

Eriksen's contract with the Serie A side is expected to be terminated in January, when he will be free to look for a new club. He spent three years in Odense's academy before joining Ajax, which also remains a potential destination: Daley Blind, the Amsterdam club's Dutch defender, also has an ICD.

"Amid the rumours, I'm telling you that I'm following the indications of the club's doctors, undergoing tests and treatment and seeing my progress within 90 days. Always positive!"

Sergio Aguero responds to rumours that he will be forced to retire by a heart condition

Appointments, sackings and loans

Retiring...Maxi Rodriguez

OUT

EUROPE

CLAUDE PUEL was fired by Ligue 1 side Saint-Etienne, while in Germany, RB Leipzig sacked **JESSE MARSCH**.

Russia and Rubin Kazan midfielder **OLEG SHATOV** announced that he would be taking a "career break" from football after a series of recurring injuries.

JOHN VAN 'T SCHIP resigned from his position as Greece manager after failing to qualify for the World Cup.

In League One, Fleetwood, Doncaster and Ipswich parted ways with managers **SIMON GRAYSON**, **RICHIE WELLENS** and **PAUL COOK** respectively. In League Two, **KEITH CURLE** left Oldham Athletic.

After three games as interim boss, **MICHAEL CARRICK** left Manchester United, ending his 15-year association with the club as player and a coach.

Brazilian striker **DIEGO FARIAS** left Cagliari after seven years at the club.

MARCEL BRANDS left his role as Everton's director of football.

ASIA

DICK ADVOCAAT quit as coach of Iraq, having failed to win any of his six World Cup qualifiers in charge.

CONCACAF

In MLS, Mexico midfielder **JONATHAN DOS SANTOS** departed LA Galaxy.

SOUTH AMERICA

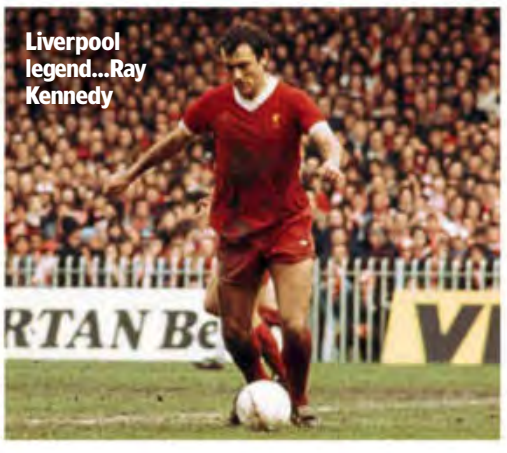
Uruguay sacked long-serving coach **OSCAR TABAREZ**, having taken them to three World Cups and five Copas America.

Uruguay legend... Oscar Tabarez

Former Liverpool, Argentina and Atletico Madrid winger **MAXI RODRIGUEZ** announced his retirement.

Flamengo parted company with coach **RENATO GAUCHO** just four months after appointing him.

OBITUARIES



Liverpool legend...Ray Kennedy

Ray KENNEDY (1951-2021)
The gifted, left-footed midfielder scored 72 goals in seven-and-a-half seasons at Liverpool, having made his name at Arsenal. In 1970-71 he hit 26 goals in all comps as the Gunners won the double.

He moved to Anfield in 1974, on the same day that Bill Shankly resigned as manager. "Maybe it will be said that one of the last things I did at this club was to sign a great new player," declared Shankly, and he was proven right: under new boss Bob Paisley, Kennedy won five league titles and three European Cups.

He left Liverpool in 1982, and later played for Swansea City and Hartlepool United, before being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1984.

Phil DWYER (1953-2021)
Cardiff's record appearance maker and their defensive rock of the '70s and '80s.

Frank BURROWS (1944-2021)
Another highly prominent figure in Welsh football, Burrows managed Cardiff twice, with a spell at rivals Swansea in between.

Bertie AULD (1938-2021)
One of the midfielders in Celtic's 1967 European Cup-winning side. Auld also won five league titles and several domestic cups in Scotland, as well as the English League Cup with Birmingham.

Dzyanis KOWBA (1979-2021)
The ex-Belarus international was assistant coach at Vitebsk in the Belarusian Premier League when he passed away aged 42.

Momcilo VUKOTIC (1950-2021)
Partizan Belgrade's second-highest appearance maker, who starred at Euro '76 as Yugoslavia came fourth on home soil. Later embarked on a long coaching career, mainly in Greece and Cyprus.

John SILLETT (1936-2021)
The manager that guided Coventry City to their shock FA Cup victory in 1987.

Fresh Ego Kid... Marvin Morgan

Douglas COWIE (1926-2021)
A Scotland international of 20 caps, Cowie made his name as a defender with Dundee, where he made a club-record 446 appearances.

Horst ECKEL (1932-2021)
The last remaining member of the West Germany team that won the 1954 World Cup, Eckel was credited with preventing Nandor Hidegkuti from dictating the final.

Louis BIMPSON (1929-2021)
Striker Bimpson made 102 appearances for Liverpool between 1953 and 1959, scoring 39 goals for the Reds.

Bernd NICKEL (1949-2021)
Nicknamed "*Doktor Hammer*", Nickel lies third on both Eintracht Frankfurt's all-time appearance and goal charts.

Marvin MORGAN (1983-2021)
A hugely popular man in English football, having developed a fashion brand that saw him rub shoulders with many of the country's biggest names. The best years of his nomadic career in the lower leagues came at Shrewsbury Town, where he helped them win promotion from League Two in 2012.

eye witness

Samindra Kunti reports

URUGUAY

Brazilians Palmeiras make it two in a row

Ten months on from their last success, Sao Paulo giants Palmeiras beat Rio rivals Flamengo to the 2021 Copa Libertadores

In many ways, the 2021 final between established powerhouses of the Brazilian game symbolised a new dawn in South American football: here were two emerging super-clubs, with mammoth revenue streams, vast fan bases and astute financial management, contesting the continental crown, further cementing Brazil's domination, playing at the refurbished Estadio Centenario in front of well-heeled fans and a global TV audience.

The Copa Libertadores and its final carry the romance of a spectacle in its purest form. They epitomise the madness and mayhem of the continent's game, one of the last bastions of unchecked football passion, but times are changing. In 2018, the final was shifted to Madrid because every single cliché about Argentinian football turned out to be true – chaos ruled. "We live it as a scam," wrote former Boca Juniors player Diego Latorre.

In 2019, organisers moved the final from Santiago to Lima because of social unrest in Chile. It was the year that CONMEBOL replaced the traditional home-and-away format with a single-leg decider, mimicking the Champions League final in a bid to exploit the match's commercial potential. All the stereotypes of European elite football were present: the match organisation, the fan zones, the security operation, the influx of football tourists and, above all, the monetisation of the entire event.

It was no different in Montevideo. Near the Uruguayan capital's lighthouse, a fan zone provided exposure to brands and sponsors. Supporters didn't mind. They were simply happy to attend and dreamt of renewed, continental glory. In spite of the – by South American standards – limited distance between Montevideo and both Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, many had struggled mightily to get there.

Equaliser...Gabriel Barbosa scores for Flamengo

In fact, most ordinary supporters were simply priced out. Ticket prices ranged from $200-$650. In Brazil, the minimum salary is a paltry $196 with unemployment and inflation on the rise. Detached from reality, CONMEBOL – alongside tour operators, airlines and hotel owners – contrived to render the final the playground of the great and the good, the rich and the famous. Palmeiras didn't even sell out their allocation of 12,000 tickets.

With all the commercialisation and corporatisation, CONMEBOL risk losing the key asset: the final's authenticity that differs in every possible way from the often antiseptic Champions League's showpiece match.

Supporters that did get to Montevideo – some by boat via Buenos Aires – wandered through a marvellous capital of blossoming blue Jacarandas and *churrasquerias* barbecues. Downtown, they discovered the coffee house frequented by renowned writer Eduardo Galeano.

History struck them once they entered the iconic Estadio Centenario. The stadium received a facelift ahead of its 21st Copa Libertadores final. Flamengo fans reminisced about their first-ever continental crown in 1981, won by Zico and Co. at the very same venue against Chile's Cobreloa.

But this final was about modernity, both Palmeiras and Flamengo

representing just that. Playing at Brazil's most modern stadium, the Allianz Parque, Palmeiras enjoy the backing of wealthy Leila Pereira, the first female president in the club's history. Flamengo have learned to monetise their fan base of some 40 million supporters.

In 2019, the Rio giants won the competition against River Plate, arguably South America's team of the decade with the venerable Marcelo Gallardo. The following year, Palmeiras succeeded Flamengo as the continent's king thanks to an extra-time goal from substitute Breno Lopes against local rivals Santos.

Both clubs reached the 2021 final on merit, but do not share the rivalry that marks some of Brazil's biggest fixtures. Palmeiras' arch-enemy is crosstown behemoth Corinthians, whereas in Rio de Janeiro, Flamengo and Vasco da Gama despise each other. The finalists' antagonism was – and is – rooted in a quest for hegemony in the modern Brazilian game. Together with Atletico Mineiro, they have pulled away from Brazil's other big clubs, outmuscling their domestic rivals through a combination of financial riches and quality squads.

Even so, both clubs endured a torrid build-up to the Copa Libertadores final.

Opening goal... Raphael Veiga celebrates scoring

Match winner... Deyverson wheels away after scoring the winning goal

Contrast...Gabriel Barbosa and Palmeiras captain Gustavo Gomez

As early as spring Palmeiras supporters demanded Abel Ferreira's dismissal, criticising his team's dour style of play, but the club hierarchy stood by him. His shamelessly conservative style suits the squad at his disposal: defensive organisation forms the cornerstone of his homogeneous counter-attacking collective. But that approach didn't bring silverware in 2021 – Palmeiras failed to win the Supercopa, the Brazilian Cup, the South American Super Cup, the league, the Sao Paulo state championship and, above all, the Club World Cup.

At Flamengo, Renato Gaucho was also tormented. Like his predecessors Domenec Torrent – a former assistant of Pep Guardiola – and Rogerio Ceni, he failed to emulate the success and swashbuckling football that rock star coach Jorge Jesus had introduced with a high-pressing modern game. Jesus' reign became a long, unprecedented and intense victory parade. In awe, the Maracana serenaded him "Mister, Mister".

Mister's big merit was that he understood how to play Gabriel Barbosa (aka "Gabigol"), Bruno Henrique, Giorgian de Arrascaeta and Everton Ribeiro. The attacking quartet simply swept past opponents, combining individual qualities, perfect communication and interchange. But in 2021 that front-line magic faded, even if Flamengo reinforced the squad with David Luiz, Andreas Pereira (on loan from Manchester United) and Kennedy, after the departures of Rafinha, Pablo Mari (essential to a high defensive line), and Gerson. Flamengo – capable of both the sublime and the ridiculous – were no longer winning, but simply slumping from failure to failure.

In a season-defining blockbuster, Montevideo, then, offered a chance at redemption, an opportunity to prove the critics wrong. Flamengo had navigated the semi-final with a 4-0 aggregate win against Ecuador's Barcelona while Palmeiras eliminated both Atletico Mineiro and Sao Paulo in the knockout phase. In an exercise of pre-emptive damage control, Renato Gaucho said:

> "In football, it's much easier to destroy than to construct. When you play a team like Palmeiras that sits back, it gets harder"
>
> **Flamengo coach Renato Gaucho**

"The most important thing is that Flamengo got here on merit. Palmeiras also got here on merit. In Brazil, only the winner is respected. In Europe, that's different. They value those who don't lift the trophy."

He added that Flamengo had a Plan A, B and C. Ferreira did; Renato Gaucho, contrary to his claims, did not. The Portuguese outthought and outmanoeuvred his Brazilian counterpart. "In football, it's much easier to destroy than to construct," said Renato Gaucho after the final. "When you play a team like Palmeiras that sits back, it gets harder."

But Palmeiras' attitude and aptitude should not have surprised anyone. Ferreira fielded a back-five defence, with Gustavo Scarpa, an attacking midfielder, dropping back to defend, similar to Chelsea's tactics against Manchester City in the Champions League final. In the semi-finals, a five-man rear-guard had held off Atletico Mineiro and the successful formula again worked wonders against Flamengo. In the fifth minute, Mayke explored space in behind Filipe Luis and teed up Raphael Veiga, 1-0.

Palmeiras dropped deep. They could now play the academic football Ferreira professes: defend and lurk on the counter, all the while dominating and denying space. Their opponents, rattled, had no reply. Flamengo had the players to decide the final in a flash of an eye, to carry the match beyond the mundane, but too many protagonists were second best to Palmeiras' fit and hard-working XI.

Flamengo were apathetic. Did they tire? They had little excuse to.

Champions...Palmeiras midfielder Felipe Melo lifts the iconic trophy

Palmeiras were playing their 105th game in 387 days, with Ferreira lamenting that he couldn't "give his best" because "the Brazilian calendar is insane and inhuman." This was not the barnstorming Flamengo of yesteryear, but a feeble, disjointed group of players, with no leadership and no plan. In the 72nd minute, following a quick one-two with De Arrascaeta, Gabriel Barbosa equalised, aided by Weverton's failure to protect his near post.

Flamengo never impressed nor truly imposed themselves. Ferreira revelled in his opponent's impotence, weighing up the game like a chess match he would ultimately win. In extra-time, Deyverson, introduced for his selfless, energetic attitude instead of the more experienced Luiz Adriano, capitalised when Andreas Perreira switched off, 2-1. The blunder was symbolic of Flamengo's defensive frailties. Ferreira shored up his midfield with Felipe Melo, the ultimate personification of his team: divisive, on and off the field, but unwavering. That grit, in a triumph for the collective over the individual, crowned Palmeiras for the second consecutive time and the third time in the club's history Copa Libertadores champions.

Exit...Renato Gaucho left Flamengo shortly after their final defeat

Vindicated, Ferreira became the most successful European coach in the history of the Copa Libertadores, moving ahead of Jorge Jesus and Mirko Jozic, the Croatian who guided Colo-Colo to the title in 1991. Two days after the final, Renato Gaucho and Flamengo parted ways.

Significantly, this was a third consecutive Brazilian win in the continent's premier club competition, highlighting the country's recent dominance of the Copa Libertadores. Even in 2018, when River Plate prevailed in "the final to end all finals" against arch-rivals Boca Juniors, Brazilian clubs had been favoured to win the tournament, but were undone by their defensive attitudes. Until 1991, Brazilian clubs had won five of 32 titles on offer since the competition's maiden edition in 1960, but gradually they prevailed, winning 13 of 27 editions before 2018. The times, then, are changing.

eye witness

Steve Menary reports

MALTA

Shaking things up

The head of Maltese football has big plans for the island nation

MFA president...Bjorn Vassallo *(credit: Domenic Aquilina)*

The main boardroom at Malta's National Stadium at Ta' Qali is full of trophies. That would be expected in the home of many national associations, but there is some irony at this gleaming collection.

The Malta Football Association (MFA) was founded in 1900, joined FIFA in 1959 and made their competitive debut five years later, when the island secured independence from Britain, but the national team has not collected any senior trophies.

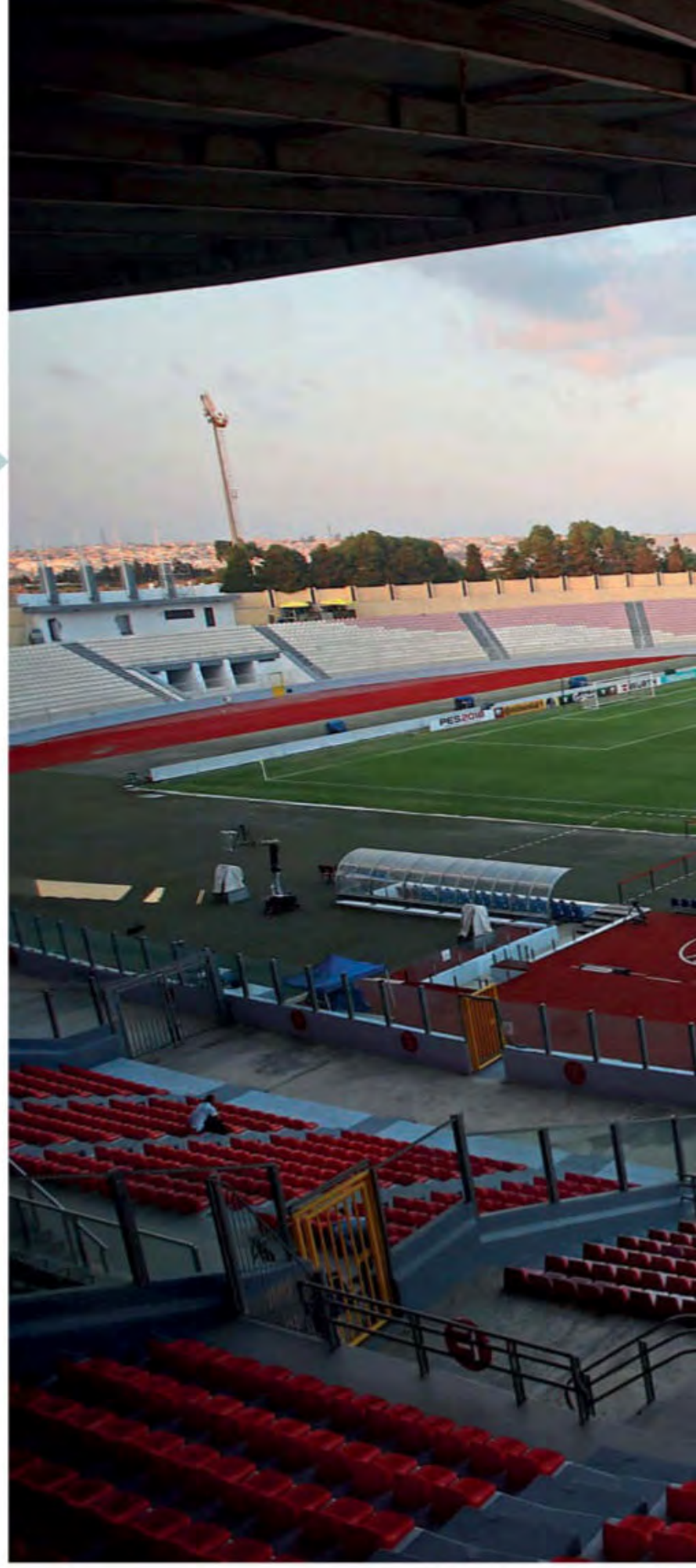
Malta's 3-0 win over Cyprus at Ta' Qali in September 2021 was only their third-ever win in World Cup qualifying – and their first at home. Even the marvellous new football museum at Ta' Qali celebrates close defeats amid a handful of memorable victories.

Malta's lack of success is harder to gauge when compared to similar sized European nations. The island has a population of 460,000 and football is easily the most popular sport ahead of water polo and rugby.

Yet while Iceland – population 354,000 – qualified for a major tournament and Luxembourg have made consistent progress, Malta's best performance in a qualifying campaign was the five points accumulated in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Coming off the back of a 2-2 draw in Slovakia, that win over Cyprus seemed to suggest that Devis Mangia's team had turned a corner. The next two results brought narrow defeats in Slovenia and Russia and when Malta secured a 2-2 draw in Nicosia, the 2008 tally of five points had been emulated.

Then the Malta of old returned. Instead of surpassing that figure, Mangia's team were battered 7-1 and 6-0 at home to Croatia and Slovakia, respectively. Those results left Malta bottom of Group H on goal difference behind Cyprus.



Ta' Qali Stadium... the home of Maltese football

Sitting in that boardroom at Ta' Qali, the MFA president Bjorn Vassallo promises: "In my mandate, I will spend a lot of money on resources to improve the technical side and the development so we do not get isolated results but constant growth in our national teams.

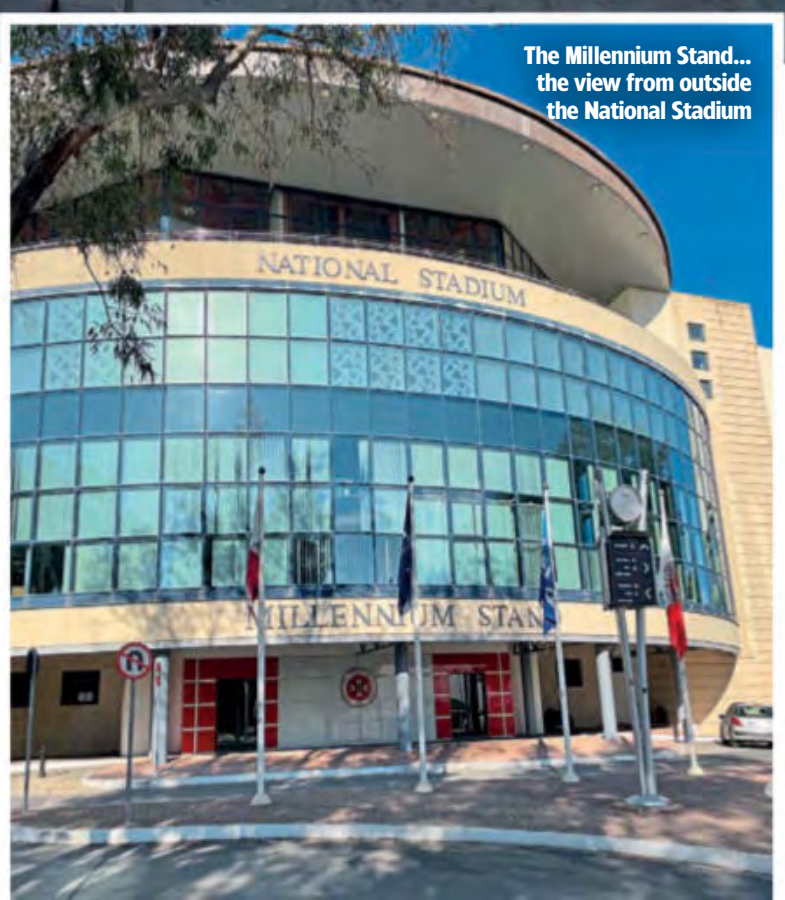
"My main ambition is for the performance of the national teams, but my plan got shaken up."

Those plans range from taking over the running of junior leagues to a €50m redevelopment of the 17,000-capacity National Stadium. Most games in Malta's

Premier League are played at Ta' Qali, as many clubs do not have facilities to stage games. The Tony Bezzina Stadium in Paola only has one stand for spectators and owners Hibernians FC prefer to play at Ta' Qali.

Of Vassallo's "shaken up" proposals, the most eye-catching was a plan to enter a team of Malta's best players into the Italian third tier, Serie C. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic scuppered that idea, which had not been greeted with universal acclaim.

Some locals were concerned that Malta's best players would need support from foreign players to compete and that would mean the MFA subsidising wages of overseas players.



The Millennium Stand... the view from outside the National Stadium

The plan is now on the backburner but Vassallo is better placed than most leaders of small European national associations to understand their place in the game's eco-system. His career as a football administrator started in the small Maltese town of San Gwann. By 2010 – aged just 30 – he was MFA chief executive, had joined various committees in UEFA and in 2016 left the island for a full-time job at FIFA as director for Europe.

Three years later, he returned home with his young family after being elected as the MFA president. Norman Darmanin Demajo had held the post for nine years and the election was relatively close. Vassallo won 83 votes against 54 for

Malta legend... Michael Mifsud

MFA council member Chris Bonnett and wants to bring unity.

"Before, the MFA invested in the infrastructure for the clubs and that was quite right," says Vassallo, whose strategy covering the period 2020-2024 titled "We Can Perform Better" will change the game in Malta completely.

The plan for a club in Serie C attracted the most attention, but his main priority is to increase the number of players from Malta who are playing professionally overseas. Traditionally, this has been a major obstacle. Family is a major priority to the Maltese and persuading young players to take a gamble and leave is difficult.

Michael Mifsud, who has a record 143 appearances for Malta, played in Germany, Scandinavia, England and Australia and is still involved at 40 for Mosta but few others have come close to emulating this local legend.

Zach Muscat is with Casa Pia in Portugal and 20-year-old Alexander Satariano joined Italian Serie B outfit Frosinone in 2021. Forward Kyrian Nwoko was also loaned by Valletta to Irish side St Patrick's this season.

Of Vassallo's "shaken up" proposals, the most eye-catching was a plan to enter a team of Malta's best players into the Italian third tier, Serie C

The national team's star also plays abroad. Teddy Teuma, who features for Belgian top-flight side Union Saint-Gilloise, was born in France but has a Maltese grandfather.

Other reinforcements for Mangia's side have less tenuous links, such as the two Italians, Birkirkara FC defender Enrico Pepe and Valletta striker Mario Fontanella, who were both awarded citizenship after five years playing in the Maltese leagues.

Those short-term fixes helped boost results. "With the good results we got, people started to believe," says Vassallo, who is widely believed to want to stand as the island's president in the future.

Asked if Malta can ever qualify for a major finals, Vassallo produces a politician's reply. "Why not?" he says. "If others have done it, then why not? We just need to work hard with

dedication and have a plan, but we need to be together."

That plan is focused on raising standards. To develop better players, the MFA created regional hubs in the north and south of the main island and on neighbouring Gozo. The best young players get 230 hours of training a year with national coaches. Vassallo has made important changes to win over the players and the clubs.

Carlo Mamo, a former international and president of the Malta Football Players' Association, explains: "After the insistence and pressure made by MFPA and FIFPro, in June 2020 the transfer fee at the end of the contract and also a compensation which had to be paid for youth players were abolished. This system was phased out of football worldwide after the landmark Bosman ruling 24 years ago but only now in Malta.

"Mr Vassallo also made important changes in the governance of the organisation. Up until a few months ago the players union did not have a voice and no voting power at federation level. Now we have one seat on the highest forum which is the executive committee and the players can voice their concerns through the players union."

The clubs have also formed their own association as part of a radical overhaul of how club football operates. Vassallo wants the top flight to become a "privatised league" with the clubs taking responsibility for the commercial aspects such as sponsorship and TV rights. As part of these changes, foreign investors will also be permitted.

Buying a Maltese club is difficult as members vote in presidents, who can be ejected by a vote at the next election. As a result, presidents can be reticent to invest and with little money from tickets, TV or sponsorship, Maltese clubs have a precarious existence.

Periodically, foreign investors arrive promising to put money into Maltese clubs but the results have not been particularly auspicious.

Syrian businessman Yahya Kirdi had already been linked with a string of failed bids for clubs ranging from Liverpool to Vicenza, Carlisle United and English non-league club Morpeth, when he arrived in Malta in 2017 promising to invest in Naxxar Lions. Two years later, he tried to sue the club's committee for €600,000 in a Canadian court.

Only this season, Hamrun Spartans were excluded from the Champions League over a match-fixing incident dating back to 2012-13, when the club's committee got involved with shady Bulgarian investors. Those investors are long gone, but, despite an appeal, the club were still excluded, which was harsh on local developer Joseph Portelli, who became Hamrun's president in 2020.

Portelli has spent heavily on players and veteran Ivory Coast international striker Seydou Doumbia was rumoured to be on wages of around €10,000 a week. That would be a record if true, but top players such as national team players can still earn as much as €5,000 a month.

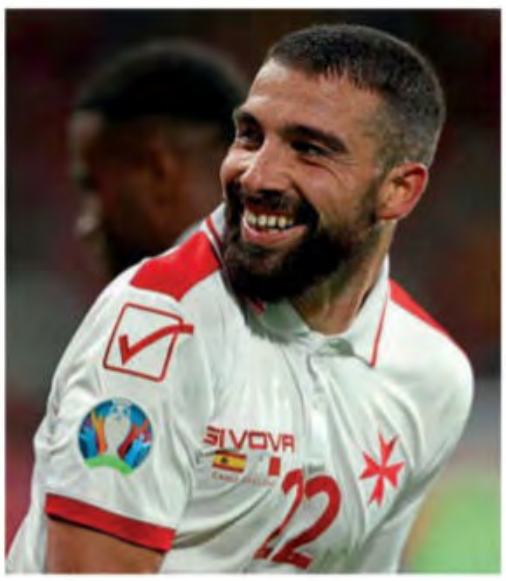
Opening clubs up to foreign investment may bring more money to attract better players from abroad and drive up standards, but investors will want to see a way of making a return. Vassallo is well aware of what has happened previously and says that the MFA will bring in a form of Fit and Proper Persons test to vet potential new owners before the rules change.

There are some Italians involved with Marsa FC but the latest investment in Maltese football has come from Scotland. Edusport – an academy based near Glasgow that trains and educates young French players – expanded to Malta in October 2021. Chris Ewing, who owns Edusport and also the Scottish semi-professional club Caledonian Braves, says: "As far as I was concerned it was a no-brainer to invest there. Malta is in the European Union; they all speak English and the weather's good all year round.

"The challenge is how you allow the investment. It's a double-edged sword as they need to improve the national team but they have a limit of foreign players, which may put off some investors. The good thing is that there is a Champions League spot."

The recent success in UEFA competition of well-funded clubs from the likes of Gibraltar and Luxembourg shows there is a place for teams from smaller European countries. Vassallo's ambition is that Malta's clubs can join them and provide further impetus for the national team that would help his strategy pay off.

Current crop...Teddy Teuma (top), Zach Muscat (bottom) and Kyrian Nwoko (bottom right)



BINATIONAUX

Hundreds of players at this year's AFCON will be members of Africa's European Diaspora. Mark Gleeson explores the increasingly common theme

The lure of competing in a major tournament means there will be a bevy of new players on display at January's Africa Cup of Nations, as participating countries turn to the Diaspora to beef up their squads for the tournament.

It is no longer only on the dusty fields of Africa where the majority of international talent begin their journeys. As much as countries still seek their next stars on home soil, they now also actively search among the migrant communities in Europe for ready-made talent to bolster their chances.

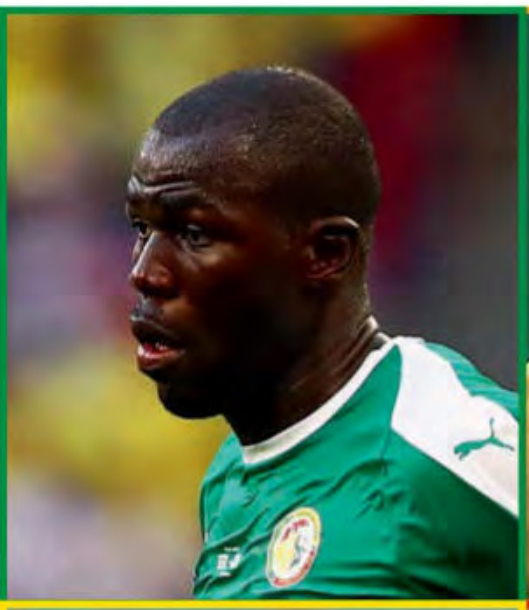
The French call them "*Binationaux*", and players of African descent born and/or raised in Europe are changing the face of the continent's top tournament.

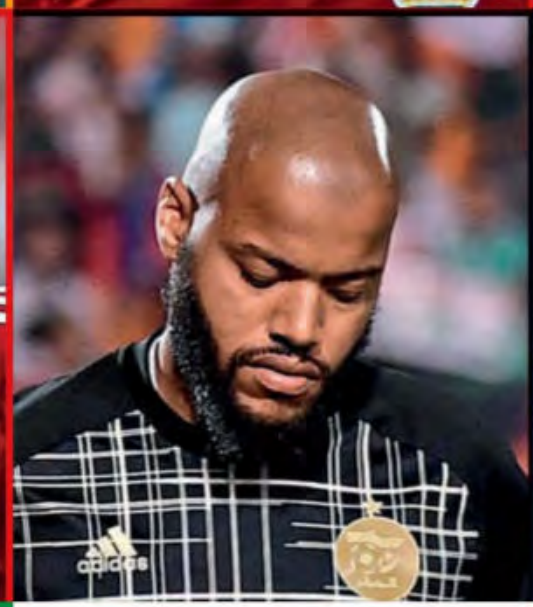
For years now, countries that were former colonies of France and Portugal have taken advantage of a steady stream of players who are the children of migrants to enhance their chances in the Cup of Nations or World Cup.

More so now, former British colonies look to the English leagues to see what they can find to bolster their squads while Equatorial Guinea, one of the continent's smallest countries, have qualified on the back of a side where most of the players are Spanish-born but with African heritage.

That is not unusual, nor a recent phenomenon. Algeria famously played France in Paris in a friendly in 2001 with six French-born players in their line-up. The 23-man Algeria squad that won the last Cup of Nations in Egypt in 2019 had 14 French-born players and nine home-born.

The players from Europe have the advantage of a good basic training in the game, a competency that is





Ordeal...Morocco eventually won the battle to enlist Munir El-Haddadi

perhaps lacking in the players that learn on the streets of Africa. Proper nutrition, too, ensures a better physicality.

Their influence, however, can also pose problems, particularly around the balance of the squad. At the 2002 finals in Mali, there was an almighty schism between the home-born players and supposedly more erudite additions from Europe in the Moroccan squad, leading to punch-ups and players being sent home. Not surprisingly, Morocco were eliminated early, despite being among the pre-tournament favourites.

These days it is less of a balancing act, with most players based at clubs in Europe, but coaches still tread warily.

Most African football associations now have active scouting networks and court players to commit their international futures to the cause of the country of their heritage, rather than of their birth.

On rare occasions, there has been a veritable tug of war over top talent, like Morocco winning the battle of the heart with the Netherlands over Hakim Ziyech; or stories of folly like the allegation that when Kylian Mbappe's father suggested to Cameroon they might want to consider looking at his son for their junior national team, a federation official demanded a bribe-type payment first.

For the most part, the *Binationaux* are players who have a fleeting chance at playing international football for the European country of their birth but are much more likely to get capped by their African country of heritage and can be easily persuaded by the chance to participate in a Cup of Nations finals – or even better the World Cup.

It can either be a choice of the heart or one of pragmatism. French-born Andy Delort suddenly decided well into this Ligue 1 career he wanted to play for Algeria a few months before the 2019 finals. They were keen, too, on the striker and, because his mother was Algerian, he was quickly naturalised in time to be selected for the tournament.

"Life is complicated, we discovered each other a little later. It's a personal decision. I want to wear the Algeria jersey," Delort said at the time.

Again, in the months leading up to the finals in Cameroon, there has been some assiduous courting.

Sometimes it is a process, as former Democratic Republic of Congo coach Florent Ibenge explained: "I invite them to come and play a friendly match so that they come to see how it works, and leave them to decide."

Playing a friendly does not commit a player's international future to one country.

The size of the squads for this tournament has been raised to 28 players, which means there will be 672 players registered to compete between January 9 and February 6. It would be accurate to suggest that, once the squads are finalised, several hundred

In demand... Lyon striker Moussa Dembele

Binationaux...Senegal midfielder Pape Gueye

French born... Algeria striker Andy Delort

will be European-born.

Hosts Cameroon managed to persuade midfielder James Lea Siliki to play after many years of persuasion. He is a former French junior international and has quickly become a valued squad member, if not yet a starter.

Galatasaray right-back Sacha Boey, recently injured, and Angers left-back Enzo Ebosse are being earmarked for a switch of nationality and, once approved by FIFA, could be included in the squad for the tournament.

All players who have played representative football for one country must seek a formal switch from world football's governing body, although are only disqualified from changing if they have won senior caps at competitive level. Even then if they have played no more than three senior games before the age of 21, they can switch after a three-year wait period. This is how former Spain international Munir El Haddadi will be lining up for Morocco at the Cup of Nations finals.

Guinea's federation invited RB Leipzig's teenage midfielder Ilaix Moriba to watch their World Cup qualifier in November in the hope he might be persuaded to play this month.

The 18-year-old was born in Conakry but raised in Spain and played for the Spanish junior national teams while at Barcelona's *La Masia* academy. He moved to the Bundesliga for a hefty €16 million fee amid reported interest from the likes of Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur.

Mohamed Bayo and Saidou Sow are two Ligue 1 regulars who have already made a recent decision to play for Guinea, while Mali are reportedly seeking a real coup in trying to lure Lyon striker Moussa Dembele to represent them. The 25-year-old played for France at every age group level from Under-16 to Under-21 and was previously at Fulham, Celtic and Atletico Madrid.

> There will be 672 players registered to compete at AFCON 2021. It would be accurate to suggest that, once the squads are finalised, several hundred will be European-born

For all of their dominance in the qualifiers for both the Cup of Nations finals and the recent World Cup scrimmage, Senegal are among the leading swains for added talent.

Head coach Aliou Cisse, himself a *Binationaux* who grew up in the suburbs of Paris not far from the home of Algeria coach Djamel Belmadi, has been efficiently fixing the deficiencies in his side's line-up.

Bouna Sarr of Bayern Munich made no secret of the fact he was holding out for a call-up from the French national team but eventually decided his chances were slim and agreed to Cisse's overtures. It helped that Sarr's father Mamadou had played for the Lions of Teranga, and that Senegal have been looking for a right-back for some time while regular choice Youssouf Sabaly struggled with injury.

On the left side of defence, Milan's Fode Ballo-Toure is also new, having switched allegiance in March, and taken the place of Moussa Wague. Abdou Diallo of Paris Saint-Germain can also play in that position but Senegal used him as a centre-back in the recent World Cup qualifiers. He is also a recent convert from the France Under-21 side and another considerable catch.

But Cisse has not stopped there. Marseille's highly-talented defensive midfielder Pape Gueye switched from France to Senegal and made his debut in November.

"I have gone to Senegal many times, my father travels there often. He talks to me a lot about the country and I have pride now to be able to defend his colours," Gueye said after his first cap.

Cisse is now courting Gueye's club-mate Boubacar Kamara, who the Senegal coach feels will further shore up the middle.

It can be something of a gamble to disrupt an efficient line-up with that many new additions, but the added quality could be the recipe Senegal seek as they go in search of their first continental title.

These are all players who might well have gone onto play for France, and the tension continues to rise over the number of *Binationaux* who come through the French system but end up playing for other countries.

But for as long as *Les Bleus* are winning major titles, it is an issue on the backburner.

Senegal manager... Aliou Cisse

Up for grabs...the AFCON trophy

The wait is over

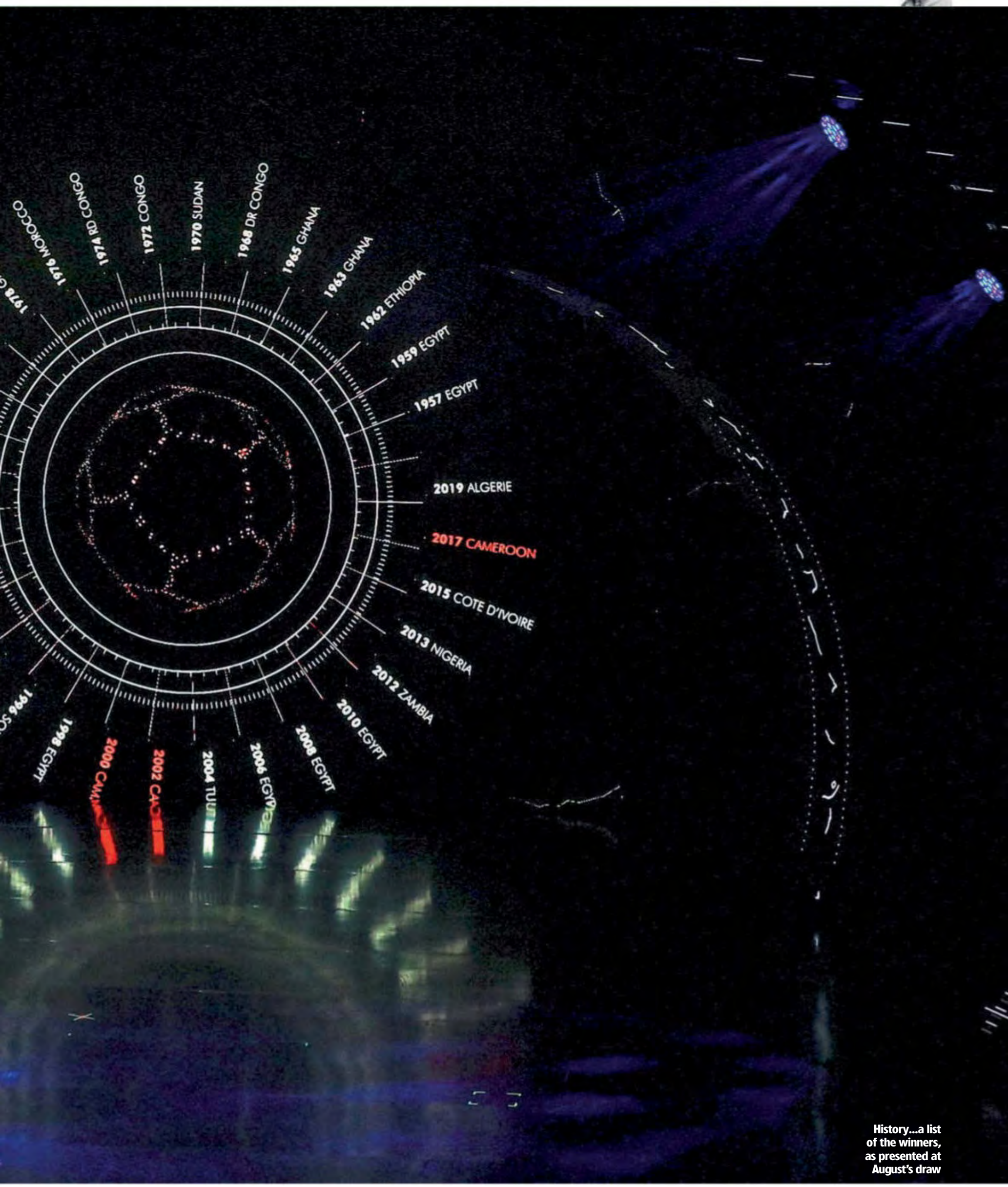
Twice-delayed tournament finally ready to begin in Cameroon

Algeria have broken records with their consistency since taking the last Africa Cup of Nations finals in Egypt in 2019, but it is again an open field when the continental championship finally kicks off in Cameroon on January 6.

The continent has rarely been dominated by one country over an extended period of time; Egypt won three AFCON titles in a row from 2006 to 2010, while also failing to qualify for two World Cups in the process.

Algeria's long unbeaten run going into the tournament is no guarantee of success. Djamel Belmadi's side might have gone 33 games without defeat, up to the conclusion of November's World Cup qualifiers, but their recent displays were not overwhelmingly convincing and the vagaries of tournament play are such that they will be among a list of potential winners rather than overwhelming favourites.

There is the usual threat from North African countries Egypt and Morocco, and from Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Senegal in the west, plus hopes for the home nation, finally getting to host the event.



History...a list of the winners, as presented at August's draw

Holders...Algeria lifted the trophy in 2019

It was due to be hosted in 2019 but delayed by two years because the Confederation of African Football (CAF) – after numerous nervous inspections – felt they were not ready. There was a flurry of stadium construction but little else in the way of infrastructure in a country that has seen little upgrade since independence more than a half-century ago.

The COVID-19 pandemic then pushed back the hosting of the tournament a further 12 months.

Cameroon's new stadiums are now ready but other facilities are poor and it could prove a real test of endurance for those staying past the opening round.

The tournament will kick off and finish at Yaounde's new Olembe Stadium, which has a capacity of 60,000. New stadia was also built in Bafoussam (Kouekong Stadium) and Limbe (Limbe Stadium), which is closest to the separatist fighting in the English-speaking Southern Cameroons region, where there is a breakaway bid.

There have been threats against the tournament from the "Ambazionia" separatists, recalling the horror attack by Cabinda separatists on the team bus of Togo at the start of the 2010 Cup of Nations finals in Angola.

It is again a 24-team tournament (for the second time), which means 16 of the 24 countries progress past the first phase – the top two in the six groups plus the four best third-place finishers.

An additional knockout round adds to the excitement and opens up opportunities for upsets, as seen at the last edition when minnows Benin and rookies Madagascar made it to the quarter-finals, while hosts Egypt were upended by South Africa.

Egypt will have legitimate ambition of redressing that home failure this time around, particularly since Carlos Queiroz has taken over as coach.

Algeria's long unbeaten run going into the tournament is no guarantee of success

However, there is a long tradition of the Arabic-speaking North African countries struggling in sub-Saharan Africa.

Hosts Cameroon, who last won in 2017 under Hugo Broos in what was an upset result in Gabon, will have the burden of home expectation, but this generation has little of the quality of past Indomitable Lions teams which thrilled the competition with their aggression and determined approach to the game. For the hosts to have any chance they will need a tide of home support to carry them over the finish line.

This could be the tournament where

Under pressure... hosts Cameroon

Final host...the Olembe Stadium in the capital, Yaounde

Senegal finally break their duck and win the African crown. They were runners-up to Algeria last time out and also lost on penalties in 2002 to Cameroon but, if they reach the final in Yaounde on February 6, they could make it third time lucky.

Sadio Mane and cohorts have proven efficient in qualifying competition and look ready now to mount the winners' podium.

The expanded field has allowed more new faces to compete, with the Comoros Islands and Gambia taking part for the first time. To be fair, Gambia won their qualifying group, so would still have qualified to a 16-team tournament, too.

Qualification for both borders on a fairy tale, but they will have high hopes of proving their worth in the opening days of the competition.

It means there are now only ten of Africa's 54 member countries that have never qualified for the finals.

This is the 33rd edition of the continental championship and of the 14 past winners ten are present: Congo, DR Congo, South Africa and Zambia did not qualify. The 34th will follow in some 18 months, moved back to a mid-year date and hosted by the Ivory Coast in June-July 2023.

SCHEDULE

GROUP A		
Jan 9	**Cameroon v Burkina Faso**	Olembe Stadium
Jan 9	**Ethiopia v Cape Verde**	Olembe Stadium
Jan 13	**Cameroon v Ethiopia**	Olembe Stadium
Jan 13	**Cape Verde v Burkina Faso**	Olembe Stadium
Jan 17	**Cape Verde v Cameroon**	Olembe Stadium
Jan 17	**Burkina Faso v Ethiopia**	Kouekong Stadium
GROUP B		
Jan 10	**Senegal v Zimbabwe**	Kouekong Stadium
Jan 10	**Guinea v Malawi**	Kouekong Stadium
Jan 14	**Senegal v Guinea**	Kouekong Stadium
Jan 14	**Malawi v Zimbabwe**	Kouekong Stadium
Jan 18	**Malawi v Senegal**	Kouekong Stadium
Jan 18	**Zimbabwe v Guinea**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
GROUP C		
Jan 10	**Morocco v Ghana**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
Jan 10	**Comoros v Gabon**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
Jan 14	**Morocco v Comoros**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
Jan 14	**Gabon v Ghana**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
Jan 18	**Gabon v Morocco**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
Jan 18	**Ghana v Comoros**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
GROUP D		
Jan 11	**Nigeria v Egypt**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
Jan 11	**Sudan v Guinea-Bissau**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
Jan 15	**Nigeria v Sudan**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
Jan 15	**Guinea-Bissau v Egypt**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
Jan 19	**Guinea-Bissau v Nigeria**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
Jan 19	**Egypt v Sudan**	Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo
GROUP E		
Jan 11	**Algeria v Sierra Leone**	Japoma Stadium
Jan 12	**Equatorial Guinea v Ivory Coast**	Japoma Stadium
Jan 16	**Ivory Coast v Sierra Leone**	Japoma Stadium
Jan 16	**Algeria v Equatorial Guinea**	Japoma Stadium
Jan 20	**Ivory Coast v Algeria**	Japoma Stadium
Jan 20	**Sierra Leone v Equatorial Guinea**	Limbe Stadium
GROUP F		
Jan 12	**Tunisia v Mali**	Limbe Stadium
Jan 12	**Mauritania v Gambia**	Limbe Stadium
Jan 16	**Gambia v Mali**	Limbe Stadium
Jan 16	**Tunisia v Mauritania**	Limbe Stadium
Jan 20	**Gambia v Tunisia**	Limbe Stadium
Jan 20	**Mali v Mauritania**	Japoma Stadium
ROUND OF 16		
(1) Jan 23	**Runner-up A v Runner-up C**	Limbe Stadium
(2) Jan 23	**Winner D v 3rd B/E/F**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
(3) Jan 24	**Winner A v 3rd C/D/E**	Olembe Stadium
(4) Jan 24	**Runner-up B v Runner-up F**	Kouekong Stadium
(5) Jan 25	**Winner B v 3rd A/C/D**	Kouekong Stadium
(6) Jan 25	**Winner C v 3rd A/B/F**	Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium
(7) Jan 26	**Winner E v Runner-up D**	Japoma Stadium
(8) Jan 26	**Winner F v Runner-up E**	Limbe Stadium
QUARTER-FINALS		
(9) Jan 29	**Winner match 1 v Winner match 2**	Roumde Adjia Stadium
(10) Jan 29	**Winner match 4 v Winner match 3**	Japoma Stadium
(11) Jan 30	**Winner match 7 v Winner match 6**	Olembe Stadium
(12) Jan 30	**Winner match 5 v Winner match 8**	Japoma Stadium
SEMI-FINALS		
Feb 2	**Winner match 9 v Winner match 12**	Japoma Stadium
Feb 3	**Winner match 10 v Winner match 11**	Olembe Stadium
THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF		
Feb 6	Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium	
FINAL		
Feb 6	Olembe Stadium	

Facetoface

TONI CONCEICAO

"The most difficult experience I've had in 30 years of coaching"

The manager of AFCON 2021 hosts Cameroon discusses his team's chances of victory on home soil

What are Cameroon's chances of winning the Africa Cup of Nations? Is there enough depth in the squad to go all the way?
It's going to be very hard for all the teams, without exception. Obviously, in order to have the goal of reaching the semi-finals or the final, we will have to work hard; we will have to be a very strong and very consistent team.

As far as our chances go, the ambition will be to go as far as possible and to try to win the title. We know that we play at home and that the public will demand our presence in the final. We have to be very cool and work hard and make sure there are no mistakes along the way. As for the squad, the important thing is that we have good players from an individual point of view and that is a fact. But in order to get all the way to the final, I will need a very strong collective strength, because otherwise we will have problems.

Sometimes the home expectation can be unrealistic ahead of such a tournament. How stifling has it been in Cameroon?
Expectations are high but we aren't hiding away from that. We really want to get as far as possible; we are ambitious because we know that the Cameroonian people demand this from the national team. The history of the team is great: they've won the Cup of Nations five times, been to seven World Cups and won the gold medal at the Olympics, so you can understand why the people demand success. I think there is a climate of optimism but we'll have to work hard to keep all the emotions in check.

So, are you confident your players can handle the burden of expectation?
The players are imbued with great ambition. Obviously, the last Nations Cup was not positive for Cameroon [round of 16 exit to Nigeria], but we have been building for two years now with this squad. It's a very cohesive, very happy group.

We will work not only from a physical and tactical point of view, but also from an emotional point of view, which is important for the players because the pressure will be great.

How important was it to win the last World Cup qualifier against Ivory Coast in November, and secure your place in the last phase of World Cup qualifiers?
This victory was very positive because of the confidence that the team gained; these victories allow them to believe in themselves more. More confidence obviously brings more motivation and it means that when we regroup at the end of December for the Cup of Nations, the spirit will be even higher.

From the moment we lost to Ivory Coast in our first group game in September, we knew the return match [in November] would be a final for us. A draw or a defeat would have taken us out of the World Cup fight and so from that point of view it was very positive to win the match.

We also had a preparatory win over Nigeria [a friendly in June] and these kinds of performances help the team to grow. The win over the Ivorians didn't bring us a title or anything, but a morale achievement of confidence and, above all, belief for the Cup of Nations and then obviously for the play-offs in March.

We have to be honest and recognise that if we hadn't eliminated Ivory Coast, there would have been misgivings about the team. Now the supporters of the national team believe that this team has the capacity to fight for the Cup of Nations. The opinion of many people regarding the national team has changed for the better.

What is your expectation of the opening match against Burkina Faso, who are an unpredictable team?
We know that Burkina Faso are at a very high and competitive level. They didn't get through to the next phase of the World Cup qualifiers, but they didn't lose any games in their group either, including two against Algeria, one of the best teams on the African continent.

Therefore, we expect a difficult game in the opener. On top of that, an opening game of such a big tournament tends to be a very emotional affair with massive public interest. This creates an adrenaline; let's see if the adrenaline is going to be positive for us. That's what we hope.

What about the rest of the group? You already played against the Cape Verde Islands in qualifying and they did not go well for Cameroon?
If we have aspirations of winning the group, we cannot drop points against teams like Cape Verde and Ethiopia. It is imperative that we beat them to move onto the next stage.

How pleasing was it to see goalkeeper Andre Onana back from suspension, and how much of a difference can he make at the tournament?
Andre couldn't join up with the squad for the nine months of his suspension and that was a real pity for us. Not only because of his indisputable footballing quality but fundamentally because of his character. He was greatly missed by the squad and, as soon as we could, we put him straight back into the team. Immediately he brought his sporting quality and an enhancement to the spirit in dressing room, which is very important to have.

Karl Toko Ekambi has also overcome a barren scoring run and has been the leading scorer in the early stages of the Europa League...
He also scored a decisive goal for us that not only highlighted his importance to the team, but also that he is a very intelligent player who knows how to read the game well. He knows how to operate in the box and I would say that he is a player we need to teach a lot. He is very important to us.

How did you get the Cameroon job?
It was a process that started two and a half years ago. I have a long-time friend, connected to the Cameroon federation, who recommended me. I had meetings with people from the federation and the Ministry of Sport, and things developed one meeting after the next. They were feeling me out because I know they had other options.

I was very glad that they chose me. I'm satisfied. I have a very good working group from a human point of view and now we are going to give the Cameroonians what they want: work and results.

This is your first job in Africa. How have you found that, a lot different to working in Europe?
How much time have you got? I could spend hours talking about it! It is certainly, by far, the most difficult experience I've had in my 30 years of coaching.

What about the World Cup in Qatar? Are Cameroon going to qualify?
I expect us to die for it. It would be the highlight of my career and it would be exceptional for the country. It will also be exceptional for many of the players who will have an only, and last, chance to appear at a World Cup. There is no higher level in your career.

Interview by Mark Gleeson

6 of the best Potential stars in Cameroon

Mark Gleeson highlights six players to keep an eye on at the Africa Cup of Nations finals

1 Nayef AGUERD
MOROCCO

The 25-year-old central defender made a major impact in Ligue 1 last season and has continued his outstanding performances at the back for Rennes this campaign.

A product of the Mohamed VI academy in his home country, Aguerd missed out on a chance to sign for Valencia at 17, and later again at Malaga, but persevered and finally got his opportunity at Dijon.

At 6ft 3ins tall, he has a commanding presence and is absolutely outstanding in the air. At Rennes his technical ability has been encouraged as well.

He was still playing in Morocco when he won his first cap in 2016, but only over the last two years has he cemented his place in the national team line-up – playing every single minute of Morocco's World Cup qualifying campaign.

2 Steven CAULKER
SIERRA LEONE

The former Liverpool, QPR and Tottenham Hotspur defender, now playing club football in Turkey, missed the last preparatory match for Sierra Leone in November as his application to FIFA for a switch in international allegiance was still being sought by his new country.

Caulker played, and scored, for England in a friendly match against Sweden back in 2012 so is entitled to make the change – as he also qualifies for Sierra Leone citizenship – and his inclusion in the squad would be a huge fillip as the West African country goes to the finals for the first time since 1996. Caulker's grandfather is from Sierra Leone.

The 29-year-old centre-back played a non-official game against Morocco's A team in October but will have little time to get to know his team-mates before the tournament kicks off.

3 Amadou HAIDARA
MALI

Haidara took a while to find his feet at RB Leipzig after moving from satellite club Salzburg but is now rated as a top Bundesliga midfielder.

His start in Germany, after a €19 million move, was hindered by a cruciate ligament injury but last season he got regular game time and is now a significant fixture in the Leipzig line-up, where he took over the No.8 shirt previously worn by African compatriot Naby Keita.

There have also been three successive Champions League campaigns to confirm his potential.

The 23-year-old will be important to Mali's hopes of advancing past the opening round of the tournament in Cameroon, where they will fancy their chances after going unbeaten in the recent World Cup qualifying campaign.

4 NANU
GUINEA-BISSAU

The transition at club level from struggling Maritimo to Porto has proven tough for the 27-year-old, but at national team level Nanu is one of the stalwarts of the consistently surprising "*Djurtus*".

Guinea-Bissau's national team compete at a third successive Nations Cup finals, which will be a second for the right-back, whose rapid pace suggests he might be the fastest player at the tournament.

He adds an incredible attacking threat when going forward and is probably at his best on the front foot rather than defending.

Porto beat Sporting to his signature last year and, while the Portuguese-born Nanu played regularly in the second half of the last campaign, he has been sidelined this season.

5 Andre ONANA
CAMEROON

A nine-month doping ban looked to have little effect when the Ajax keeper returned to action in November to make some telling saves and produce a man-of-the-match performance for Cameroon in their decisive World Cup qualifier against the Ivory Coast.

He played two matches and showed no ring rust despite his Dutch club deciding the 25-year-old can sit on their bench ahead of an anticipated sale in January. Inter are high on the suitors' list although Onana is expected to attract widespread interest after being rated among the best keepers in European club football.

He is a product of the Samuel Eto'o Academy and was a junior at Barcelona from the age of 14.

6 KAMALDEEN Sulemana
GHANA

The potential to be Africa's next superstar attacker is evident already in the 19-year-old, who is a product of the Right to Dream Academy and FC Nordsjaelland before joining Rennes last summer for €20 million.

Kamaldeen was earmarked from an early age for a quick transition to the top and his time in Ligue 1 would seem a stepping stone to one of the bigger leagues, while the Cup of Nations finals is the proper stage to help increase his profile further.

He is quick and clever, and former Ghana youth team coach Didi Dramani reckons he could be as prolific as Kylian Mbappe.

Hosts...Cameroon will be playing on home soil

CAF founding members... Ethiopia

CAMEROON

Home advantage is always handy in these tournaments, although the last hosts to win were Egypt in 2006 – and even they needed a penalty shootout to ensure success.

Cameroon have plodded through since their surprise Cup of Nations triumph in Gabon in 2017, when they were not fancied and, truth be told, rode a wave of some good fortune before taking the trophy.

This generation is far removed from the all-conquering teams of the 1980s or the era of Samuel Eto'o, when they were back-to-back winners in 2000 and 2002.

But there is the hope they can build momentum and provide a credible challenge for the title.

KEY PLAYER

Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting has never been consistent in making himself available for Cameroon but, with possible World Cup qualification looming, the 32-year-old German-born Bayern Munich forward has played his part recently and has the talent to drive the team's attack and hopes.

THE COACH

Toni Conceicao, 60, is a former Portugal international right-back, who replaced Clarence Seedorf after the last Cup of Nations finals. Had a patchy career as a club coach in multiple countries but managed to hang onto his job despite some mediocre form.

Leading the line... Choupo-Moting

BURKINA FASO

A workmanlike team who are difficult to beat, as African champions Algeria discovered in the World Cup qualifiers, and with a penchant for creating an upset.

It is a lack of resources, and depth in their squad, that holds them back from higher achievement but their potential was evidenced in 2013 when they got all the way to the final.

There are a handful of survivors from that side who will be seeking to repeat the feat in Cameroon, although a place in the knockout stage is likely to be their immediate ambition.

"*Les Etalons*" are back after failing to qualify for the last finals in Egypt in 2019 which ended a run of five successive appearances.

KEY PLAYER

Aston Villa's **Bertrand Traore** has struggled with a thigh injury recently, with concern over the 26-year-old winger's fitness for the tournament dominating their preparations; he is key to their hopes of a successful campaign.

THE COACH

Kamou Malo has been coach since mid-2019 as Burkina Faso turned away from a preference for employing European coaches and handed responsibility to one of their own, banking on the 58-year-old's success in winning domestic league titles to help the fortunes of the national team.

Seeking upsets... Burkina Faso

CAPE VERDE

One of the continent's smallest nations, with a population of around 500,000, continue to punch well above their weight, albeit with most of their players drawn from the large emigrant communities in the Netherlands, Portugal and the USA.

This is the third time they have qualified, having reached the quarter-finals in their maiden appearance in 2013, when their coach burst into song at the post-match press conference, and again in 2015, when they went home undefeated.

They qualified for these finals by finishing unbeaten, beating Cameroon 3-1 in Praia and holding them to a goalless draw away from home.

KEY PLAYER

Speedy winger **Ryan Mendes**, 31, will captain the team as their most experienced and valuable player, having competed for the Cape Verdeans at their last two Cup of Nations finals appearances following his national team debut back in 2010.

THE COACH

The 51-year-old **Pedro Leitao Brito** is better known as "Bubista" and spent 14 years as a defender in the Cape Verde team, serving as captain before embarking on a coaching career with a bevy of local teams and then getting the national team job two years ago.

Overachieving... coach Bubista

ETHIOPIA

One of CAF's founder members, and former winners, but long past their glory days despite a burgeoning league and a large population.

Athletics might bring Ethiopia Olympic medals and international recognition but it is a passionate footballing country, frequently left disappointed by the failings of their national team.

They won a key game in the qualifiers against fellow contenders Madagascar to snatch second place in their group, behind Ivory Coast, and return to the finals for only the second time in 21 editions.

But in the recent World Cup qualifiers they managed only a single victory in six games and will not have any lofty ambitions in Cameroon.

KEY PLAYER

The 29-year-old captain **Getaneh Kebede**, back home after a spell in South Africa, has often proved something of a one-man show, producing match-winning displays for his country, while also ensuring they play an eye-pleasing brand of attacking football when things are going their way.

THE COACH

Wubetu Abate has had a long career coaching clubs in Ethiopia and winning the league title, and had a spell across the border in Sudan, before being appointed national team coach in September 2020 on a two-year contract.

Skipper... striker Getaneh Kebede

Beaten finalists... Senegal were the 2019 runners-up

Three in a row... Zimbabwe have qualified for their third consecutive AFCON finals

GUINEA

"*Syli Nationale*" had a convincing qualifying campaign to get into the finals but then imploded in the World Cup preliminaries between September and November, firing coach Didier Six in the process.

The taciturn Frenchman likely contributed to his own demise, but the country's cause was not helped by a military coup in September that had Guinea briefly banned from hosting any football, thereby impacting their hopes of a credible tilt at World Cup qualification.

Guinea used to be a power in African football in the 1970s, and were runners-up in 1976, but remain inconsistent participants.

But they are capable of causing waves and, with a bit of momentum, may prove spoilers in Cameroon.

KEY PLAYER

Naby Keita has struggled with injury of late, some of it picked up on international duty, and has not been as regular as he might have liked for Liverpool. But when fit, the midfielder is very much the talisman for his country and gives them an added impetus.

THE COACH

Ex-Arsenal, Marseille and PSG striker **Kaba Diawara** stepped in as caretaker coach at the end of the World Cup qualifiers in November. If the 45-year-old keeps the role for the tournament, he will be one of the youngest and most inexperienced on the bench.

Talisman... Naby Keita

MALAWI

The "warm heart of Africa", Malawi is among the poorest countries on the continent and largely an also-ran in the African game.

This is just the third time they've qualified for the finals, following appearances in 1984 and 2010, where they started with a stunning 3-0 victory over Algeria but then lost the next two to be eliminated.

Subsequent accusations of match-fixing surfaced during the Wilson Perumal saga but have never been dealt with.

Malawi qualified for these finals by edging out Uganda in a decisive tie in March, but in the recently completed World Cup qualifiers they finished bottom of their group.

KEY PLAYER

Frank Mhango is also known as "Gabadinho" and is a former Golden Boot winner in the South African league with Orlando Pirates. The 29-year-old has a reputation for a quick turn and devastating pace but he has been struggling with form of late.

THE COACH

Meke Mwase followed a well-trodden path for Malawian footballers to South Africa as a professional, also playing centre-back for his country, and has come through coaching the junior national teams to first serve as caretaker and now permanent coach since the 2019 departure of Belgian Ronny Van Geneugden.

Out of form... Gabadinho

SENEGAL

Senegal are still searching for their first AFCON success, having been runners-up at the last edition in 2019. They also lost, on penalties, in the 2002 final to Cameroon and will be among the favourites for the title, boasting a high-quality squad.

Increasingly the national team draws its players from the migrant community overseas, thus boosting its chances of a place at the World Cup in Qatar in November.

It has also meant competition for places, which has seen an overhaul of the team in the two and a half years since the last Cup of Nations.

Anything but victory will be considered a failure given how they have romped through both Cup of Nations and World Cup qualifying over the last 18 months.

KEY PLAYER

Talisman **Sadio Mane** commands respect from both team-mates and opponents alike, with the Liverpool ace showing a strong dedication to his national team and the cause of delivering a first major title to the "Lions of Teranga".

THE COACH

The 45-year-old ex-Birmingham City, Portsmouth and PSG defender **Aliou Cisse** leads Senegal at a fourth major tournament, having also captained the country at the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea, where they shocked holders France in the opening game and reached the quarter-finals.

National icon... Sadio Mane

ZIMBABWE

A swathe of natural talent makes Zimbabwe a dangerous outfit, but they are badly let down by the foibles of their administrators and the economic malaise in country.

After completing their World Cup qualifying campaign without a win, the nation's FA was suspended by the government, who accused it of not accounting for money it had been given from the public purse to prepare for their last Nations Cup appearance in 2019.

The risk of being kicked out of the tournament loomed large, but there has since been some backtracking by the government to avoid any confrontation with FIFA.

This is the third successive Cup of Nations finals that Zimbabwe have qualified for – before that they had been to only two.

KEY PLAYER

Tino Kadewere scored ten goals in Ligue 1 last season for Lyon but is struggling now with form and injury. The striker, who turns 26 on the eve of the finals, will be looking to the tournament for a much needed boost.

THE COACH

Norman Mapeza, who has made Platinum FC the top club side in Zimbabwe, returned for a fourth stint as coach on a three-month contract in September for the World Cup qualifiers. He was expected to stay on and take the team to Cameroon.

Coach... Mapeza celebrates with his players

Fairy tale...Comoros will play at their first AFCON finals

Upset...Morocco suffered a shock exit to Benin in 2019

COMOROS

A veritable fairy tale for the small island nation, whose colonial links with France mean they have a large migrant community in Marseille, which is where the coach and bulk of his players hail from.

Comoros are one of the newest members of world football. They only joined FIFA in 2005 and first entered qualification for the Cup of Nations and World Cup in 2010.

They didn't win their first competitive international until 2016 – at their 21st attempt – when they beat Botswana 1-0 at home in the 2017 Cup of Nations preliminaries.

In the five years since, their progress is remarkable and they reached their first AFCON finals after a qualifying campaign that saw them unbeaten until their last game in Egypt, by which time they had already secured their berth.

KEY PLAYER

El Fardou Mohamed Ben Nabouhane, 32, known simply as "Ben" is the Comoros' all-time top scorer and has a ratio of more than a goal every other game since joining Red Star Belgrade in 2018 from Greek club Olympiakos.

THE COACH

Amir Abdou coached amateur football in France when he was asked to serve as assistant coach, only for his proposed boss to pull out, thrusting him into the hot seat, where he has been since 2014.

Coach... Amir Abdou

GABON

There is often a sense Gabon's "*Pantheres*" are a one-man outfit, capable of producing results when Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is available, but bereft of any chance on the frequent occasions he is not playing for the national team.

His father, Pierre, was captain of Gabon when they first qualified for the finals in 1994 and the family dynasty looms large over football in the central African country, whose oil wealth has seen them host the tournament twice.

Gabon's best return was a quarter-final place in 1996 and again as co-hosts in 2012, when Aubameyang missed the decisive penalty in a shootout that saw them eliminated by Mali.

They qualified for these finals as runners-up to The Gambia, but ahead of DR Congo and Angola, who both have strong teams.

KEY PLAYER

The 27-year-old **Denis Bouanga** often fills in for Aubameyang as the lead attacker and has got several key goals for Gabon. He will enjoy the break from Ligue 1 where he has featured regularly for struggling Saint-Etienne this season.

THE COACH

Patrice Neveu has been a regular on the African circuit with previous spells in charge of the national teams of Niger, Guinea, DR Congo and Mauritania before taking up the Gabon post in March 2019.

Front-line... Aubameyang and Bouanga

Credit: Instagram @bouanga_20

GHANA

The Black Stars last won the AFCON in 1982 and each passing edition without success has been the cause of growing frustration, particularly as there have been a large number of close misses.

They are four-time African champions, a record bettered only by Egypt (seven) and Cameroon (five), but the 40-year wait will be a burden hanging over the heads of the current crop of youngsters.

Ghana got as far as the semis six times in a row between 2008 and 2017, reaching the final twice, but at the last tournament in Egypt they exited early in the last 16.

The sudden emergence of several potential international stars holds out hope that Ghana can make a breakthrough, although this tournament might come too soon.

KEY PLAYER

Thomas Partey is the engine of the Black Stars, who is heading for a third successive Cup of Nations finals appearance, and will be hoping to make more of an impact with the team this time round as the 28-year-old has the ability to drive the team on.

THE COACH

Milovan Rajevac answered an SOS from Ghana during the World Cup qualifiers in September, returning to the job where the 67-year-old Serbian made his name by guiding them to the 2010 World Cup quarter-finals.

Midfield engine... Thomas Partey

MOROCCO

Morocco have arrived at the last two AFCON finals heavily fancied to go home with the title, but in 2017 went out in the quarter-finals and two years later suffered a embarrassing elimination at the hands of tiny Benin in the last 16.

Again they will be fancied, even if their side has been given a huge overhaul in the last two years by an ever-tinkering coach.

Vahid Halilhodzic excluded Hakim Ziyech and Noussair Mazraoui, the duo he accused of feigning injury to avoid playing a friendly, but offered opportunity to the likes of Imran Louza and Adam Masina (both Watford), Aymen Barkok (Eintracht Frankfurt) and the former Belgium U21 international Ryan Mmaee.

Morocco have only once before won the Cup of Nations – in 1976 when it was hosted in Ethiopia.

KEY PLAYER

Spanish-born **Achraf Hakimi**, now 23, debuted for Morocco at 17 and has been a regular over the last five years, while also cementing his reputation in club football, as evidenced by the €60m fee PSG paid to sign him from Inter in July.

THE COACH

Former Yugoslavia striker **Vahid Halilhodzic** coached Ivory Coast at the 2010 AFCON and Algeria at the 2013 finals, but did poorly at both and this tournament is a chance for the irritable 69-year-old to set that record straight.

Wing-back... Achraf Hakimi

Seven-time winners... Egypt won their last AFCON title in 2010

Pressure... Nigeria are expected to perform in Cameroon

EGYPT

The Pharaohs have won more Cup of Nations titles (seven) and been to more finals (25) than any other country but flopped at home at the last edition in 2019.

They went into December's Arab Cup unbeaten since their elimination by South Africa in Cairo at the last finals, but it has been a run without conviction – so much so that coach Hossam El Badry was sacked in September without losing a game.

Egypt have several players left in the team from the squad that lost to Cameroon in the 2017 final and their profile means they are always counted among the favourites.

What the Egyptians have in their favour is self-belief from consistent dominance of the club game on the continent and experience of tough conditions playing in other countries.

KEY PLAYER

Mohamed Salah last scored a goal for his country in March but provided several key assists in the recent World Cup qualifiers and is very much the talismanic influence on the team, who sometime have an overreliance on the ability of the 29-year-old Liverpool star.

THE COACH

Carlos Queiroz was born in Mozambique and spends a lot of time in Africa but his reputation comes from coaching stints at Real Madrid and Manchester United, plus World Cup finals appearances with Portugal and Iran.

Talisman... Mo Salah

GUINEA-BISSAU

It will be the third successive Cup of Nations finals for the small West African country, whose reputation as a rogue and dysfunctional state is the opposite to the growing prominence of their football team.

They were ranked 195th in the world a decade ago after irregular participation in major tournament qualifiers but rose up to a high of 68th place when they were shock qualifiers for a first-ever Cup of Nations appearance in 2017.

Like another former Portuguese colony, Cape Verde, they've turned to the migrant community in Europe to significantly strengthen their side.

They went out early in both previous appearances and are still to win a game at the tournament, which will be their primary aim in Cameroon this time round.

KEY PLAYER

The electric 26-year-old winger **Mama Balde** hails from Sporting's prodigious youth factory but has belatedly made his breakthrough in France at Dijon and Troyes, with almost 20 Ligue 1 goals since arriving in 2019.

THE COACH

Baciro Cande had his first stint as coach of the national team from 2003-2008 and the 54-year-old was reappointed in 2016, becoming something of a folk hero at home, where he has won nine league titles with Sporting Bissau, five of them in successive years.

Winger... Mama Balde

NIGERIA

A far from convincing World Cup qualifying campaign between September and November had the Super Eagles once again pushing the panic buttons.

Although they did win the group, there were two poor home displays against the Central African Republic and Cape Verde, whose depth is so far inferior to that of the continent's most populous nation.

Nigeria are three-time AFCON winners, the last in 2013 in South Africa with an untried and untested team that grew in momentum as the tournament progressed.

There are similar elements about this team as well, to remind us that Nigeria can never be written off. But how they cope without injured star striker Victor Osimhen, who fractured an eye socket for Napoli in November, remains to be seen.

KEY PLAYER

Wilfred Ndidi is closing in on 50 caps for Nigeria and has proven an increasing mainstay of the side, with the 25-year-old midfielder now regularly transferring his form from Leicester City to the national team.

THE COACH

The 68-year-old **Gernot Rohr** was appointed Nigeria coach in 2016 but had his deal extended after qualifying the Super Eagles for the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Has been under intense pressure though, with rumours he will be sacked prior to the AFCON kick-off.

Ruled out... Victor Osimhen

SUDAN

Sudan will likely have just one foreign-based player, at a club in neighbouring Egypt, in their squad as they compete at the finals for the first time since 2012, securing their place by upsetting South Africa in a decisive qualifier in March.

Sudan are former winners, back in 1970 when they were hosts, but this is only the fifth time they have qualified for the finals since.

Having a home-based squad means there is the advantage of longer preparation, without the constraints of the FIFA window for internationals, plus Sudan also participated in December's Arab Cup in Qatar.

But whether that will see them well-honed for the Cup of Nations finals remains to be seen. They are all too often lacking in confidence.

KEY PLAYER

Right-back **Ather El Tahir** moved to Egyptian side Smouha from Al Hilal Omdurman in Khartoum in 2020, with the 25-year-old a rare export from a country where playing for one of the top clubs offers among the best salaries in African football.

THE COACH

The 62-year-old Frenchman **Hubert Velud** was the coach when Togo's team were attacked in Angola's disputed Cabinda province ahead of the 2010 finals, and shot in the arm during the attack that killed three people.

Coach... Hubert Velud

Holders...Algeria go into the tournament as favourites

Point to prove... Ivory Coast are keen to make up for failing to qualify for the World Cup

ALGERIA

The holders will go into the tournament on the back of a run of 33 unbeaten matches at the end of the November World Cup qualifiers, not far off the record that Italy set in September.

Success for Algeria in Egypt in 2019 was only their second in the Cup of Nations, and their first since winning on home soil in 1990, but was achieved in impressive fashion.

Coach Djamel Belmadi has built a veritable "golden generation" for Algeria, rivalling the side that went to the World Cup in Spain in 1982 and beat West Germany.

But he will know better than most the travails of trying to ensure consistent success in African football, and particularly in a tournament with as many potential pitfalls as in Cameroon.

KEY PLAYER

Riyad Mahrez has been part of Algeria's side since the eve of the 2014 World Cup, just months after his move to Leicester City, and the 30-year-old has the distinction of having scored in the last three Cup of Nations tournaments.

THE COACH

The 45-year-old **Djamel Belmadi's** playing career took in stints at Paris Saint-Germain, Marseille, Manchester City and Southampton, and he captained Algeria at the 2004 Cup of Nations finals, taking over as coach in 2018.

World class... Riyad Mahrez

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

The two previous participations of the "*Nzalang Nacional*" in the Cup of Nations have been as hosts, first along with Gabon in 2012 and then as an emergency stand-in when Morocco pulled out in 2015.

On both occasions, they have performed beyond expectation, reaching the quarters in 2012 and semi-finals in 2015, when their loss in Malabo to Ghana set off a fierce riot by frustrated spectators that needed helicopters and armoured vehicles to quell.

This time, the team has qualified through the preliminaries, finishing behind Tunisia in their group but edging out Tanzania and Libya.

After years of hiring Brazilians, turning them into instant citizens and national team stars, Equatorial Guinea are now a more legitimate operation with players mainly from Spain, the former colonial power.

KEY PLAYER

Emilio Nsue has been captain since his debut in 2013, having previously played for Spain at junior level, and although at 32 his club career looks to be in limbo, he is still Equatorial Guinea's go-to man.

THE COACH

Juan Micha, 46, played for Equatorial Guinea and then went to Spain to coach, returning home to first take charge of the women's team and then various age group sides before signing a one-year contract last February.

Returning... Juan Micha

IVORY COAST

Failure to advance in the World Cup qualifiers puts a damper on the prospects of "*Les Elephants*", whose decisive game against Cameroon in November was played without winger Wilfried Zaha, who allegedly asked to be excused from international duty.

While the story was that he had picked up a virus on his previous African trip one month earlier and not yet shaken it off, missing out on such a key game suggested trouble under the surface.

The Ivorians will, however, see the Cup of Nations as a chance for redemption and certainly know their way around the tournament.

This will be Ivory Coast's 24th appearance at the finals – only Egypt have been to more – and their ninth tournament in a row.

KEY PLAYER

Franck Kessie has an air of maturity and experience well beyond his 25 years and drives the Ivorian side from midfield like a natural successor to Yaya Toure, who captained *Les Elephants* to the Cup of Nations title in 2015.

THE COACH

Aged 43, **Patrice Beaumelle** will be among the youngest coaches at the finals but he has considerable Cup of Nations experience as assistant to Herve Renard when he won the 2012 title with Zambia and again in 2015 with Ivory Coast, the job Beaumelle took in 2020.

Midfield drive... Franck Kessie

SIERRA LEONE

There was much controversy about Sierra Leone's qualification for the Cup of Nations finals – their first appearance since 1996.

The COVID officer at their last qualifier at home to Benin – where they had to win but their visitors needed only avoid defeat – declared that key Benin players had failed their PCR tests and could not play. Benin then refused to take to the field in protest.

Amid the COVID-19 testing row, which saw another proposed clash of the two nations postponed, the game was rescheduled for a third time in June – and Sierra Leone won 1-0 to qualify for only the third time.

They will be expected to be one of the first casualties of the tournament in Cameroon.

KEY PLAYER

Yayah Kallon broke through in Genoa's first team at the start of the season and kept his place in the side and, although still only 20, could provide the quality that the Leone Stars need – although his refugee status in Italy needs to be sorted first before he can travel.

THE COACH

Manchester-born **John Keister** played in the lower reaches of the Football League as well as coaching at non-league Margate. He kept in touch with his roots in Sierra Leone though, and is now in his second spell as national coach.

Genoa wonderkid... Yayah Kallon

Overcoming adversity...Mali didn't play a home game in World Cup qualifying

Stalwarts... this is Tunisia's 15th AFCON appearance in a row

GAMBIA

This is a first-ever appearance at the finals for the small West African country, who finished top of their qualifying group ahead of Gabon, and eliminated both Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is testament to their Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet, who managed to coax resources from a near bankrupt federation and an equally poor sports ministry to give his squad an optimal chance.

There are a surprising number of Gambian players competing in Europe – some of them former refugees – and a decent pool of talent to choose from.

The draw also offers the Scorpions the chance to make it past the first round, and into the knockout stages, at their first attempt, as long as they keep their defensive discipline and do the job on the counter-attack.

KEY PLAYER

The 23-year-old **Musa Barrow** is effective either on the left of the attack or as a centre-forward. The Bologna man will be the player Gambia look to for inspiration and experience at the finals.

THE COACH

Tom Saintfiet hails from Mol in Belgium and has had an incredible ten different assignments as a national team coach but, for the 48-year-old, the Gambia has been his best return.

First finals... Tom Saintfiet

MALI

One of the better teams to have never had previous success at the AFCON finals, Mali could play a major role in this tournament.

This is an eighth successive tournament appearance for "*Les Aigles*", who finished third in both 2012 and 2013.

Their best performance to date was as runners-up to Congo way back in 1972 – the last time the tournament was hosted in Cameroon.

The fact they were banned from playing at home during the recent World Cup qualifiers yet still easily won their group is indicative of their ability, building on players from the Diaspora as well as success at junior level in continental competition.

KEY PLAYER

Full-back and captain **Hamari Traore**, who stars for Rennes in France and will turn 30 during the tournament, has been a model of consistency for Mali since his debut in 2015 and played at the last two finals in 2017 and 2019.

THE COACH

Mohamed Magassouba took over the Mali job in 2017 but was caretaker coach for two years before a permanent appointment was made, which was a second national team job for the 64-year-old after also previously coaching the Democratic Republic of Congo national team in the 1990s.

Ex-caretaker... Mohamed Magassouba

MAURITANIA

The primary reason Mauritania emerged from almost nowhere to qualify for the last AFCON finals was the time that coach Corentin Martins was given to build the side.

It was the antithesis of the short tenures that usually characterise coaching African national teams and Mauritania were able to reap the rewards.

Former French international Martins went on to qualify the country for a second successive finals, losing only one game in their qualifying group, but was then inexplicably fired in October as they performed with far less distinction in World Cup qualifying.

The impact of a knee-jerk reaction from the federation could be a negative one.

KEY PLAYER

French-born 26-year-old **Aboubakar Kamara** was also eligible for Senegal but agreed in 2020 to throw in his international prospects with Mauritania. The former Fulham forward, now playing in Greece, adds an improved edge to their attack.

THE COACH

The 52-year-old Frenchman **Didier Gomes Da Rosa** was appointed in November, continuing a journeyman career over the last nine years in Africa where he has coached clubs in Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Guinea, Rwanda, Sudan and Tanzania.

Switching allegiance... Aboubakar Kamara

TUNISIA

The North Africans are a model of consistency in the African game, extending their record number of successive appearances at the finals to 15, having not missed a tournament since their hosting in 1994.

During all that time, they have posted a solitary success (as hosts in 2004) and were semi-finalists two years ago. They invariably get out of the group stage, having succeeded in ten of the past 14 tournaments.

A lack of depth in their squad means that for all their solidity, they probably lack the cutting edge needed to go all the way and win the event again.

But there is always the potential their workmanlike approach could deliver again after all these years.

KEY PLAYER

Wahbi Khazri, the Corsican-born Saint-Etienne forward, will be competing in his fifth finals tournament and, at the age of 30, might be aiming for a few more before retirement.

THE COACH

Mondher Kebaier was a welcome break from the long list of foreign coaches Tunisia had continued to appoint when the 51-year-old was a surprise choice for the post in August 2019, after having worked at the country's top three clubs – Club Africain, Esperance and Etoile du Sahel.

Fifth finals... Wahbi Khazri

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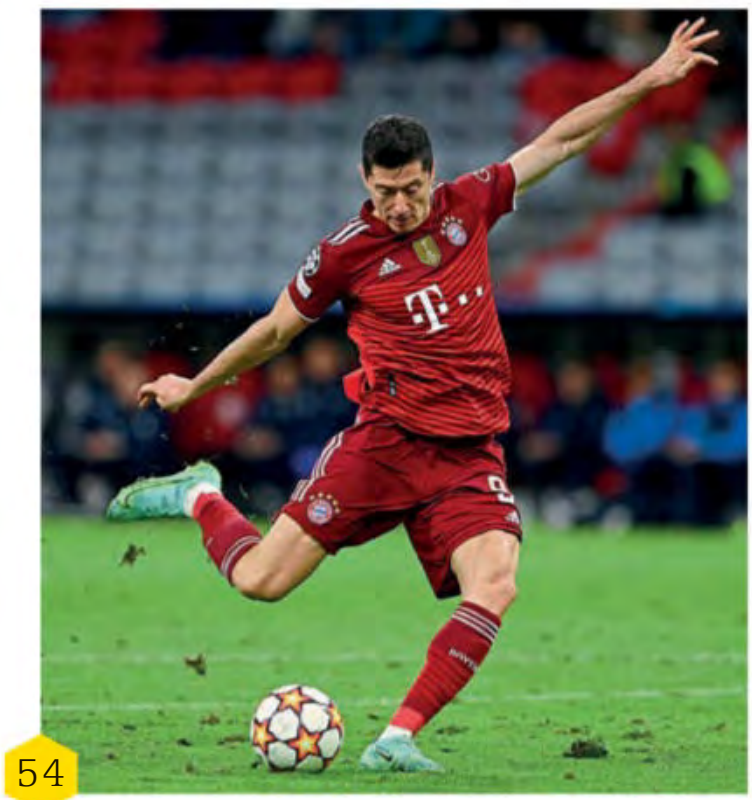
World Soccer Awards 2021

THE RESULTS OF OUR 40TH ANNUAL AWARDS – AND THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED SHAPE THE GAME OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS

PLAYER
COACH/TEAM
WOMEN
PEOPLE
OBITUARIES



TWO IN A ROW FOR LEWANDOWSKI

Robert Lewandowski named World Player of the Year for the second consecutive year

Since the *World Soccer* awards first began in 1982, only Michel Platini, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have ever been named World Player of the Year in back-to-back years. Now, Robert Lewandowski's name can be added to that illustrious list.

Continuing where he left off in 2020, the Bayern Munich and Poland striker was in scintillating goalscoring form once again as he surpassed the seemingly unbreakable Bundesliga record of the late, great Gerd Muller. With 41 league goals, he overtook the Bayern legend's tally from the 1971-72 campaign, thereby securing his first-ever European Golden Shoe. For most of our panel, that was enough to win their vote.

Still, missing out on the Champions League, or international glory with Poland, meant that Lewandowski's competition for this year's award was much stiffer than last year.

Winning the Copa America with Argentina put Lionel Messi right back in contention after finishing a distant third in 2020; Jorginho becoming a European champion for both club and country made the Italian midfielder a popular choice, while Mohamed Salah's

QATAR
AIRWAYS

breathtaking start to the season put him right among the contenders too.

We asked the voting panel to select five players in order, with their first choice receiving five points, second place receiving four points, and so on. Interestingly, if we had only asked for one name, Jorginho would have taken

Missing out on the Champions League, or international glory with Poland, meant that Lewandowski's competition for this year's award was much stiffer than last year

the runners-up spot, rather than third where he ultimately ended up.

The UEFA Player of the Year can console himself by being one of the key men in this year's *World Soccer* Men's Team of the Year: Italy. Their manager, Roberto Mancini, was also a runaway leader in the Men's Manager of the Year, with only Chelsea and Thomas Tuchel rivalling them as challengers.

It is rare for a team to win the award while also ending their year so disappointingly. Italy's failure to qualify for next year's World Cup automatically was made all the more surprising by their excellence in the summer. Indeed, it continues an extraordinary narrative for the team and their coach: Mancini was rightly hailed for lifting his country from the despair of failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia to European champions. Missing out on Qatar would be another extraordinary twist in the tale but, nevertheless, their

Manager of the Year...Roberto Mancini

Previous World Player winners

1980s

1982 Paolo Rossi
Juventus & Italy
1983 Zico
Udinese & Brazil
1984 Michel Platini
Juventus & France
1985 Michel Platini
Juventus & France
1986 Diego Maradona
Napoli & Argentina
1987 Ruud Gullit
Milan & Netherlands
1988 Marco van Basten
Milan & Netherlands
1989 Ruud Gullit
Milan & Netherlands

1990s

1990 Lothar Matthaus
Internazionale & West Germany
1991 Jean-Pierre Papin
Marseille & France
1992 Marco van Basten
Milan & Netherlands
1993 Roberto Baggio
Juventus & Italy
1994 Paolo Maldini
Milan & Italy
1995 Gianluca Vialli
Juventus & Italy
1996 Ronaldo
Barcelona & Brazil
1997 Ronaldo
Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil
1998 Zinedine Zidane
Juventus & France
1999 Rivaldo
Barcelona & Brazil

2000s

2000 Luis Figo
Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal
2001 Michael Owen
Liverpool & England
2002 Ronaldo
Internazionale/Real Madrid & Brazil
2003 Pavel Nedved
Juventus & Czech Republic
2004 Ronaldinho
Barcelona & Brazil
2005 Ronaldinho
Barcelona & Brazil
2006 Fabio Cannavaro
Juventus/Real Madrid & Italy
2007 Kaka
Milan & Brazil
2008 Cristiano Ronaldo
Manchester United & Portugal
2009 Lionel Messi
Barcelona & Argentina

2010s

2010 Xavi
Barcelona & Spain
2011 Lionel Messi
Barcelona & Argentina
2012 Lionel Messi
Barcelona & Argentina
2013 Cristiano Ronaldo
Real Madrid & Portugal
2014 Cristiano Ronaldo
Real Madrid & Portugal
2015 Lionel Messi
Barcelona & Argentina
2016 Cristiano Ronaldo
Real Madrid & Portugal
2017 Cristiano Ronaldo
Real Madrid & Portugal
2018 Luka Modric
Real Madrid & Croatia
2019 Lionel Messi
Barcelona & Argentina

Team of the Year...Euro 2020 champions Italy

Euro 2020 performance makes them worthy winners.

In the women's categories, there was a clean sweep for European champions Barcelona, the manager that guided them to last season's Champions League, Lluis Cortes, and their captain, Alexia Putellas.

By sweeping aside Chelsea 4-0 in the final in Gothenburg, Barca ended the reign of Lyon, who had won the previous five titles – including 2019, when they beat the Catalan side in the final.

Just like their men's team under Pep Guardiola a decade ago, Barca have, at times, played football on another level to the rest of Europe, and their clean sweep of honours is demonstrative of their dominance.

Only Olympic champions Canada, and their English coach Bev Priestman, offered any kind of challenge in the voting, while Putellas' nearest rival was her Barcelona and Spain team-mate, Jennifer Hermoso.

2020s

2020 Robert Lewandowski
Bayern Munich & Poland

2021 WINNERS

Rank	Name	Total
MEN'S WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR		
1	Robert Lewandowski *Bayern Munich & Poland*	223
2	Lionel Messi *Barcelona/Paris Saint-Germain & Argentina*	171
3	Jorginho *Chelsea & Italy*	123
4	Mohamed Salah *Liverpool & Egypt*	122
5	Karim Benzema *Real Madrid & France*	59
6	N'Golo Kante *Chelsea & France*	54
7	Kevin De Bruyne *Manchester City & Belgium*	43
8	Gianluigi Donnarumma *Milan/Paris Saint-Germain & Italy*	40
9=	Kylian Mbappe *Paris Saint-Germain & France*	31
9=	Erling Haaland *Borussia Dortmund & Norway*	31
11	Cristiano Ronaldo *Juventus/Manchester United & Portugal*	18
12	Giorgio Chiellini *Juventus & Italy*	16
13	Romelu Lukaku *Internazionale/Chelsea & Belgium*	14
14	Leonardo Bonucci *Juventus & Italy*	6
15	Neymar *Paris Saint-Germain & Brazil*	5
16=	Simon Kjaer *Milan & Denmark*	3
16=	Mason Mount *Chelsea & England*	3
16=	Phil Foden *Manchester City & England*	3
16=	Ruben Dias *Manchester City & Portugal*	3
16=	Pedri *Barcelona & Spain*	3
21=	Casemiro *Real Madrid & Brazil*	2
21=	Raheem Sterling *Manchester City & England*	2
21=	Antonio Rudiger *Chelsea & Germany*	2
21=	Federico Chiesa *Juventus & Italy*	2
21=	Edouard Mendy *Chelsea & Senegal*	2
21=	Gerard Moreno *Villarreal & Spain*	2
27=	Marquinhos *Paris Saint-Germain & Brazil*	1
27=	Declan Rice *West Ham United & England*	1
27=	Kyle Walker *Manchester City & England*	1
27=	Sadio Mane *Liverpool & Senegal*	1
27=	Jan Oblak *Atletico Madrid & Slovenia*	1
MEN'S WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR		
1	Roberto Mancini *Italy*	33
2	Thomas Tuchel *Chelsea*	26
3=	Pep Guardiola *Manchester City*	2
3=	Christophe Galtier *Lille/Nice*	2
5=	Lionel Scaloni *Argentina*	1
5=	Jurgen Klopp *Liverpool*	1
5=	Diego Martinez *Granada*	1
MEN'S WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR		
1	Italy	40
2	Chelsea	14
3=	Bayern Munich	3
3=	Manchester City	3
5=	Lille	2
5=	Argentina	2
7=	England	1
7=	Bodo/Glimt	1
WOMEN'S WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR		
1	Alexia Putellas *Barcelona & Spain*	89
2	Jennifer Hermoso *Barcelona & Spain*	55
3	Vivianne Miedema *Arsenal & Netherlands*	52
4	Sam Kerr *Chelsea & Australia*	47
5	Christine Sinclair *Portland Thorns & Canada*	26
6	Lieke Martens *Barcelona & Netherlands*	23
7	Caroline Graham Hansen *Barcelona & Norway*	19
8	Fran Kirby *Chelsea & England*	18
9	Ashley Lawrence *Paris Saint-Germain & Canada*	11
10	Wendie Renard *Lyon & France*	6
11=	Aitana Bonmati *Barcelona & Spain*	5
11=	Barbra Banda *Shanghai Shengli & Zambia*	5
13=	Ada Hegerberg *Lyon & Norway*	4
13=	Kosovare Asllani *Real Madrid & Sweden*	4
13=	Lucy Bronze *Manchester City & England*	4
13=	Pernille Harder *Chelsea & Denmark*	4
13=	Ji So-Yun *Chelsea & South Korea*	4
18=	Carli Lloyd *NJ/NY Gotham & USA*	3
18=	Christiane Endler *Paris Saint-Germain/ Lyon & Chile*	3
18=	Julia Grosso *Texas Longhorns & Canada*	3
18=	Stina Blackstenius *BK Hacken & Sweden*	3
22	Stephanie Labbe *Rosengard/Paris Saint-Germain & Canada*	2
23=	Debinha *North Carolina Courage & Brazil*	1
23=	Dzsenifer Marozsan *Lyon/OL Reign & Germany*	1
23=	Ellen White *Manchester City & England*	1
23=	Irene Paredes *Paris Saint-Germain/ Barcelona & Spain*	1
23=	Kim Little *Arsenal & Scotland*	1
23=	Magdalena Eriksson *Chelsea & Sweden*	1
23=	Megan Rapinoe *OL Reign & USA*	1
WOMEN'S WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR		
1	Lluis Cortes *Barcelona*	16
2	Bev Priestman *Canada*	6
3	Emma Hayes *Chelsea*	5
4	Kenny Shiels *Northern Ireland*	2
5	Jonatan Giraldez *Barcelona*	1
WOMEN'S WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR		
1	Barcelona	20
2	Canada	8
3	Chelsea	2

THE VOTING PANEL

Adam White	*France*
Adel Ferdowsipour	*Iran*
Alexander Bobrov	*Russia*
Alexandra Jonson	*Spain*
Ashok Purohit	*Oman*
Ben Bocsak	*England*
Boris Bogdanov	*Russia*
Carl Worswick	*Colombia*
Cees van Cuilenborg	*Netherlands*
Dariusz Kurowski	*Poland*
Darren Fletcher	*England*
Domenic Aquilina	*Malta*
Emanuel Rosu	*Romania*
Emmanuel Ayamga	*Ghana*
Fabio Licari	*Italy*
Francois Colin	*Belgium*
Gabriel Johnson	*France*
Glenn Moore	*England*
Guillem Balague	*Spain*
James Kelly	*England*
James Nalton	*England*
Jamie Carragher	*England*
Jamie Evans	*World Soccer*
Jared Tinslay	*World Soccer*
Jen O'Neill	*England*
Jim Holden	*England*
John Duerden	*Asia*
Jose Enrique	*Spain*
Keir Radnedge	*England*
Kevin Palmer	*England*
Klaas-Jan Droppert	*Netherlands*
Lasana Liburd	*Trinidad & Tobago*
Les Dickens	*Ecuador*
Lukas Vrablik	*Slovakia*
Manos Staramopoulos	*Greece*
Mark Gleeson	*South Africa*
Mark Pitman	*Wales*
Martin del Palacio Langer	*Mexico*
Mike Plastow	*Japan*
Milorad Stojmanovski	*North Macedonia*
Miron Goihman	*Moldova*
Molly Hudson	*England*
Nick Bidwell	*England*
Oleg Zadernovsky	*Ukraine*
Oluwashina Okeleji	*Nigeria*
Paddy Agnew	*Italy*
Paul Hassall	*England*
Peter Drury	*England*
Peterjon Cresswell	*Hungary*
Phil Gordon	*Scotland*
Rasim Movsumzadeh	*Azerbaijan*
Robbie Fowler	*England*
Rumen Paytashev	*Bulgaria*
Ryan Baldi	*England*
Sam Beckwith	*Czech Republic*
Sam Matterface	*England*
Samindra Kunti	*Belgium*
Sasa Ibrulj	*Bosnia & Herzegovina*
Sean Creedon	*Republic of Ireland*
Simon Hill	*Australia*
Stephen Fishlock	*World Soccer*
Steve Menary	*England*
Tom Kundert	*Portugal*
Vicente Dattoli	*Brazil*
Victor Gusev	*Russia*
Vidir Sigurdsson	*Iceland*
Vladimir Novak	*Serbia*
Zdravko Reic	*Croatia*

Clean sweep...Barcelona's Alexia Putellas lifts the Champions League trophy

PLAYER

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI

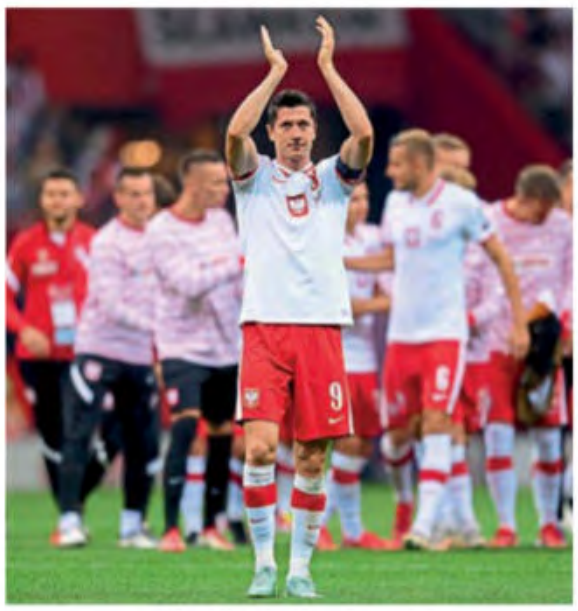
World Player of the Year

Of all the elite players to have been overshadowed by the astonishing achievements of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo in the last decade, few have remained as consistently prolific as Robert Lewandowski. He may have had to wait until beyond his 30th birthday, but the Poland marksman has now moved out of that shadow and established himself as the world's best centre-forward.

In 2020, he was rewarded for spearheading Bayern's treble-winning outfit, recognised as the best player in the best team; the outstanding cog in an incredible machine. This year though, it's been all about him. Other than their entirely predictable retention of the Bundesliga crown, the Bavarians failed to hit the heights of the previous season, and in doing so they proved just how much they rely on Lewandowski.

They missed him badly in the Champions League quarter-final defeat to Paris Saint-Germain, when a rare knee injury ruled him out of both legs. It is also hard to imagine that Bayern would have suffered their shock second-round exit from the 2020-21 German Cup to Holsten Kiel if their talismanic striker had started the match.

The sheer volume of goals that he scored was frightening. Gerd Muller's record of 40 in one Bundesliga campaign had stood for almost 50 years before last season; not only did Lewandowski break the record, he did so having played five fewer games. Indeed, last season was the first time that the Pole had



Poland hero...Lewandowski on international duty

Golden Shoe... Lewandowski with the trophy *(Credit: Kicker)*

Player of the Year...Robert Lewandowski

played fewer than 30 league games since he arrived in Germany back in 2010. That didn't stop him from producing his most prolific campaign, winning the first Golden Shoe of his career in the process.

There were plenty of other records that Lewandowski sent tumbling along the way, too. He scored in 13 consecutive home league games, a Bundesliga-record streak that included 24 goals; he broke a Bayern record by scoring in 19 consecutive games in all competitions, a run that ended in October; he won his fourth Bundesliga Golden Boot in a row, and sixth in total, moving within one of another of Muller's all-time records; and he surpassed Klaus Fischer on the league's list of all-time top scorers to move into second place – again, behind Muller.

After 12 games of the current campaign, Lewandowski had already scored 14 Bundesliga goals, taking his overall tally to 291. Muller is on 365, while the Germany legend also leads in the Bayern record books, with 563 goals to Lewandowski's 319.

Lewandowski turned 33 in August and, usually, it would be fair to assume that time is running out for him to catch Muller. But his exploits over the last couple of years have forced us to reconsider what a player's peak years should be.

"It's how football is now," said his former manager Jurgen Klopp recently. "33, 34 – that's the best age of a footballer: you understand the game better, you can judge the pitch better, you can see situations long before they will happen."

Ronaldo and Messi continuing to score goals well into their 30s could be explained as part of their usual convention-defying excellence, but the Bayern man's form hints at a wider trend. The likes of Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Harry Kane, who are all approaching their 30th birthdays, will be taking note: their best years may yet be ahead of them.

"Age is only a number and, with my experience and preparation, I know I can play on at the top level for a few years longer," said Lewandowski recently, after collecting the Golden Shoe trophy. "Maybe, like wine, I can grow even better with age."

Bayern certainly hope so, as do Poland. Lewandowski scored three goals for his country at Euro 2020 – his best-ever return at a major tournament – but it wasn't enough for them to advance from the group.

Even with his ability to defy the ageing process, Qatar 2022 may be his last opportunity to play at a World Cup. He has done everything within his power to get there: Poland lost two games in qualifying – 2-1 defeats to England and Hungary – the only two games in which the captain did not play. He had a hand in more than a third of their total goals, scoring eight and assisting another four. When they face Russia in the play-offs in March, they will need him to deliver once again.

Getting to Qatar, and then reaching the knockout stages, will be among the top of his targets for 2022, as will reclaiming Bayern's European crown.

"Age is only a number...I know I can play on at the top level for a few years longer. Maybe, like wine, I can grow even better with age"

Robert Lewandowski

The evidence of this year shows that, as long as he's playing, both teams have every chance of achieving their goals.

And if he does tick off all of those objectives? This time next year, we'll probably be discussing the first player to win this award three times in a row.

Jamie Evans

FACT FILE

Age *33 (21.08.88)*
Club *Bayern Munich (Ger)*
Country *Poland*
Previous clubs *Delta Warsaw, Legia Warsaw II, Znicz Pruszkow, Lech Poznan, Borussia Dortmund*
Honours *Champions League 2020; Club World Cup 2020; Bundesliga 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; DFB-Pokal 2012, 2016, 2019, 2020; DFL-Supercup 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021; UEFA Super Cup 2020; Ekstraklasa 2010; Polish Cup 2009; Polish SuperCup 2009*

COACH/TEAM

ROBERTO MANCINI & ITALY

World Manager of the Year, World Team of the Year

Was it all just a Midsummer Night's Dream? The fact that Italy and Roberto Mancini have won both *World Soccer*'s Team and Manager of the Year awards serves to remind us that, recent negative results notwithstanding, 2021 was indeed a magical year for Italian football.

Italy's triumphal march down the road to redemption, from the 2017 elimination from the Russia World Cup to Euro 2020 triumph, achieved by playing Mancini-inspired, quality football was undoubtedly one of the great highlights of the year.

When the Giampiero Ventura-coached Italy crashed out against Sweden in November 2017, that disaster represented Italy's worst football moment of the last 60 years. Not since the World Cup elimination in 1958 at the hands of Northern Ireland (who ironically have just played their part in prompting a potential repetition of that elimination, with that 0-0 Windsor Park draw) had a result prompted such nationwide dismay and soul-searching.

Champions...*Azzurri* centre-back Leonardo Bonucci raises aloft the Euro 2020 trophy

The long march back to the top table of international football began six months later with the appointment of 56-year-old Roberto Mancini, a sumptuously talented player who, unlike his predecessor, had a highly impressive coaching CV, having led both

Internazionale and Manchester City to league title successes.

Mancini affected a Copernican revolution, essentially replacing the traditional Italian defensive mentality with a surprisingly attacking mindset. Himself a gifted, quality player, Mancini put his trust in a penchant for good football and good footballers, those with "*piedi buoni*" (literally "good feet").

Key to Mancini's takeover was the creation of a very tight-knit management unit, comprising old friends and companions in arms: Gianluca Vialli (delegation head), Gabriele Oriali (team manager), Fausto Salsano and Attilio Lombardo (assistant coaches). No coincidence that three of these four played with him in the 1991 Serie A title-winning Sampdoria side, whilst Oriali worked alongside him during four highly-successful seasons as coach to Inter (2004-08).

By the time Italy arrived at the delayed Euro 2020 finals on the back of a 27-match unbeaten run, the revolution was steaming along. The quality of Italy's football marked them down as serious contenders, notwithstanding the squad's tournament inexperience and the lightweight nature of a team that revolved around little "good'uns" such as Marco Verratti, Jorghino, Nicolo Barella and Lorenzo Insigne.

A 3-0 demolition job on Turkey in their opening game confirmed that these *Azzurri* might be just as good as many of us had believed. From then on, Italy and Mancini got very little wrong

A 3-0 demolition job on Turkey in their opening game in Rome confirmed that these *Azzurri* might be just as good as many of us had believed. From then on, Italy and Mancini got very little wrong. A second-half wobble against Austria in the second round, a penalty shootout win against Spain in the semi-finals and Luke Shaw's second-minute goal in the final came close to sinking them but the overall enthusiasm, resilience and class of this team survived it all.

Not for nothing, Mancini observed after the Austria game, their first sudden-death tie of the tournament, that his side could now "just sail on without a bother". His reasoning was that, having absorbed that fright and having proven their physical resilience, the *Azzurri* were now good to go all the way.

In the end, Italy v England was the dream final, a clash not only between two great footballing nations but also one between arguably the two most in-form teams of the tournament. In the opinion of many, too, Italy were full value for their Euro 2020 final win, given the consistently high quality of their football (their 2-1 quarter-final win over Belgium is a case in point).

Inevitably, Italy's win was greeted not just with nationwide rejoicing but also nationwide relief in the wake of that bitter humiliation back in 2017.

In a perfect serendipity, that relief was twinned with another, more important national resurrection for Italy, namely the seeming emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed 133,000 lives in Italy.

To some extent, this Italian team's success plugged itself into a much needed "feel good" moment, one that represented a partial exorcism of the COVID-19 trauma. Player after player during the tournament dedicated their success "to all those who have suffered and lost loved ones because of COVID".

Mancini has taken Italy down a new road and Italians have seen something they have never seen before from their national team, namely a side that played intense attacking, one-touch football – a sort of *tiki-taka*, Italian style.

Even if his Italy subsequently managed to throw away a World Cup qualifying group win that had seemed in the bag (if you miss a penalty in both matches against your closest rivals, Switzerland, you are clearly tinkering with disaster), all is not lost. Mancini still believes that his side has the quality and class to win its way through the new two-match play-off process.

Dejected...Manuel Locatelli after the 0-0 draw in Belfast

While defeat to North Macedonia (or Portugal or Turkey) in the play-offs would add a stunning chapter to the remarkable story of Mancini's Italy, it would also be a great pity if an Italy team of this quality, style and bravura did not make it to Qatar next November.

Paddy Agnew

PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1982 Enzo Bearzot, *Italy*
1983 Sepp Piontek, *Denmark*
1984 Michel Hidalgo, *France*
1985 Terry Venables, *Barcelona*
1986 Guy Thys, *Belgium*
1987 Johan Cruyff, *Ajax*
1988 Rinus Michels, *Netherlands/Leverkusen*
1989 Arrigo Sacchi, *Milan*
1990 Franz Beckenbauer, *West Germany/Marseille*
1991 Michel Platini, *France*
1992 Richard Moller-Nielsen, *Denmark*
1993 Alex Ferguson, *Manchester United*
1994 Carlos Alberto Parreira, *Brazil*
1995 Louis van Gaal, *Ajax*
1996 Berti Vogts, *Germany*
1997 Ottmar Hitzfeld, *Borussia Dortmund*
1998 Arsene Wenger, *Arsenal*
1999 Alex Ferguson, *Manchester United*
2000 Dino Zoff, *Italy*
2001 Gerard Houllier, *Liverpool*
2002 Guus Hiddink, *South Korea/PSV*
2003 Carlo Ancelotti, *Milan*
2004 Jose Mourinho, *Porto/Chelsea*
2005 Jose Mourinho, *Chelsea*
2006 Marcello Lippi, *Italy*
2007 Alex Ferguson, *Manchester United*
2008 Alex Ferguson, *Manchester United*
2009 Pep Guardiola, *Barcelona*
2010 Jose Mourinho, *Internazionale/Real Madrid*
2011 Pep Guardiola, *Barcelona*
2012 Vicente del Bosque, *Spain*
2013 Jupp Heynckes, *Bayern Munich*
2014 Joachim Low, *Germany*
2015 Luis Enrique, *Barcelona*
2016 Claudio Ranieri, *Leicester City*
2017 Zinedine Zidane, *Real Madrid*
2018 Didier Deschamps, *France*
2019 Jurgen Klopp, *Liverpool*
2020 Hansi Flick, *Bayern Munich*

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1982 *Brazil*
1983 *Hamburg*
1984 *France*
1985 *Everton*
1986 *Argentina*
1987 *Porto*
1988 *Netherlands*
1989 *Milan*
1990 *West Germany*
1991 *France*
1992 *Denmark*
1993 *Parma*
1994 *Milan*
1995 *Ajax*
1996 *Nigeria*
1997 *Borussia Dortmund*
1998 *France*
1999 *Manchester Utd*
2000 *France*
2001 *Liverpool*
2002 *Brazil*
2003 *Milan*
2004 *Greece*
2005 *Liverpool*
2006 *Barcelona*
2007 *Iraq*
2008 *Spain*
2009 *Barcelona*
2010 *Spain*
2011 *Barcelona*
2012 *Spain*
2013 *Bayern Munich*
2014 *Germany*
2015 *Barcelona*
2016 *Leicester City*
2017 *Real Madrid*
2018 *France*
2019 *Liverpool*
2020 *Bayern Munich*

COACH/TEAM

LLUIS CORTES & BARCELONA

Women's World Manager of the Year, Women's World Team of the Year

There hasn't been much for fans of Barcelona Men's team to celebrate over the past 12 months. The departure of Lionel Messi and the financial woes his exit emphasised, combined with the failure to properly compete for La Liga or the Champions League, has meant that the Nou Camp has been a fairly depressing place in 2021. For Barcelona Femeni, however, it's been an entirely different story.

Their near-perfect year saw them become the first Spanish side to win the Women's Champions League, doing so by demolishing WSL champions Chelsea 4-0. Barcelona thus became the first club in history to win a Champions League title for both its men and women's sides.

They were just as devastating domestically. Lluis Cortes' team ended the 2020-21 league season with 33 wins out of 34, finishing the title-winning campaign with a record-breaking 99 points from the maximum 102. A sole 4-3 defeat to Atletico Madrid prevented them from ending the season unbeaten.

Manager of the Year...Lluis Cortes

Their total of 167 league goals was more than double the tally of the league's second-most prolific side, rivals Real Madrid (75). By conceding just 15 times, they ended the season with an astonishing goal difference of +152.

As if that wasn't already impressive enough, they then beat Levante 4-2 in the final of the Copa de la Reina in May to become the first Spanish women's side to complete the continental treble.

Perhaps their only real blow of 2021 came just under a month after their Copa success; Cortes announced his decision to step down as manager of Barca Women's team after two and a half seasons in charge, citing physical and emotional strain as his reasons.

"When I took over, I told my friends and some of the players that I would never leave until this team wins the Champions League, and we did it," he said in a video recorded for the club.

"It has been a lovely period for me. We have experienced so many emotions with this group of people. Winning our first treble has made us

Team of the Year...Barcelona

extremely happy, but it has also been a very tough season. We started training on July 10 and until now that has been 353 days of very hard work, effort, being together.

"With all the conditions surrounding COVID, I think this season has worn a lot of us out, both physically and emotionally.

"Right now I don't feel I have the energy to keep leading this team. The best team in the world needs a coach who can drive them, be contagious and transmit strength to the group and I don't feel able to do that right now. It has been a very draining year."

As well as their first Champions League, the Cortes era ended with two league titles, two Copas de la Reina and a Copa Catalunya. His 89 per cent win percentage in all competitions made

> "When I took over, I told my friends and some of the players that I would never leave until this team wins the Champions League, and we did it"
>
> **Lluis Cortes**

it a tough act to follow, but Barca are showing no signs of letting up under Jonatan Giraldez – Cortes' former assistant.

The Catalans started the 2021-22 season with ten league wins from ten, 58 goals in their favour and just two against. They also topped their Champions League group at the halfway stage, with three wins from three, including a 4-1 dismantling of Arsenal.

As Giraldez continues to make his mark on the squad, Cortes is embarking on a similar mission as manager of Ukraine Women's team. Interestingly, he'll face some of his former players in September 2022, as Spain and Ukraine meet in Group B of the qualifying phase for the 2023 World Cup. Whatever the outcome, we'll likely see some warm embraces on the pitch at the final whistle.

Jared Tinslay

PLAYER

ALEXIA PUTELLAS

Women's World Player of the Year

Four of the players that helped Barca to last season's treble feature in the top seven of this year's Women's World Player of the Year vote, with Alexia Putellas and Jennifer Hermoso finishing first and second on the podium respectively.

It marks an incredible haul of honours for Putellas in 2021, who was crucial in Barcelona's treble-winning campaign and subsequently became the first Spanish winner of the UEFA Women's Player of the Year and Women's Ballon d'Or, as well as Spain Women's Player of the Year.

She's registered over 55 goals and assists for club and country this calendar year, including a penalty in the Women's Champions League final and a brace in the Copa de la Reina final, in which she was also named Player of the Match.

The departure of Vicky Losada in the summer to Manchester City saw the attacking midfielder take over the captain's armband on a permanent basis, and it didn't take long for her to lift her first trophy; Barca beat Italian champions Juventus 6-0 in the inaugural Women's Gamper Trophy in August.

"In the Gamper game my team-mates said to me that I had to train lifting trophies because up to now I had not done it," she revealed in an interview with the club. "It is a special moment but you are not on your own, the important thing is the path you have chosen to get there and how you did it."

Barcelona renewed her contract in September for a further three years, and she celebrated later that month by netting one of the fastest hat-tricks in the club's history. She scored three goals in four minutes in the 8-0 victory over Valencia, one of which was a spectacular strike from 40 yards out.

The 27-year-old also made history for *La Roja* in 2021, surpassing Marta Torrejon's record for national team appearances with her 91st cap in their Women's World Cup qualifying victory over Ukraine in October.

Player of the Year... Alexia Putellas

It's certainly been a remarkable 12 months, but what are her ambitions for 2022? "To carry on the same. My dream now is to think that when I leave this club I'll be leaving a legacy, having given everything and won trophies."

Jared Tinslay

PREVIOUS WINNERS

Women's World Player of the Year

2020 Pernille Harder, *Wolfsburg/Chelsea & Denmark*

Women's World Manager of the Year

2020 Jean-Luc Vasseur, *Lyon*

Women's World Team of the Year

2020 Lyon

> "My dream now is to think that when I leave this club I'll be leaving a legacy, having given everything and won trophies"
>
> **Alexia Putellas**

MANAGER

THOMAS TUCHEL

Champions League winner and second in the *World Soccer* Manager vote

Borussia Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke and Paris Saint-Germain director of sport Leonardo would not have particularly enjoyed seeing Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel make an instantly impressive impact at Stamford Bridge in the second half of last season, steering his new side to Champions League glory thanks to splendid victories over Atletico Madrid, Porto, Real Madrid and Manchester City.

While in charge of Dortmund (2015-18) and PSG (2018-20), Tuchel spectacularly fell out with both Watzke and Leonardo, thus leaving himself ripe for the sack. Now, however, the boot is on the other foot, with the Bavarian-born coach firmly ensconced at the pinnacle of the European game. Not bad for someone whom the PSG high command jettisoned on Christmas Eve 2020 – a mere four months after leading the Parisians to the silver medal in the Champions League – and who often was lambasted in the French media for not giving the Parc des Princes outfit a recognisable playing identity and for not keeping a tight rein on star names Kylian Mbappe and Neymar.

What Tuchel achieved at Chelsea in just a few months last term can only be categorised as phenomenal. Under previous Chelsea boss Frank Lampard, the Blues had been labouring badly, sloppy tactically, demotivated and disunited. All this would change dramatically with the perfectionist Tuchel on the case. Here was a masterclass in righting an apparently sinking ship. Every call a roaring success: considerably upping the organisation and intensity levels, rebuilding confidence and especially transforming the back-line into the most impenetrable of units.

The 48-year-old is a details man and the Chelsea pros have clearly responded to that strong hand on the tiller. Tremendously competent as well as visionary, he was just what Chelsea required.

Taste of success... Tuchel kisses the Champions League trophy

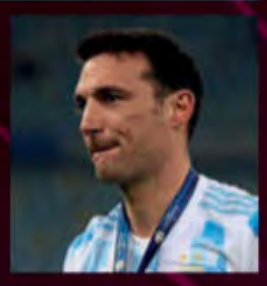
Tuchel's reputation as the spiky, obsessive control freak has caused him problems in the past. But certainly not with Chelsea, where everyone swears by his powers to mobilise a group, prepare an immaculate game plan and create a winning culture. Working in the Premier League very much appears to have brought out the best in him. "I have the feeling that at the moment, I'm in the perfect environment," he told German sport magazine *Kicker* in August. "The training mentality of the players [in England], their dedication to the basics, warms my heart and makes every day a good one."

Strange as it may seem for a such a talented team builder and strategist, Tuchel has, up until quite recently, proved something of a love-hate figure, either rated as extraordinarily brilliant in his methods or totally overrated. The way he hit the ground running in west London should no doubt help to bring in a swathe of fresh converts. "People absolutely did not know what a great man and communicator Thomas Tuchel is," says legendary former Dortmund and Bayern Munich boss Ottmar Hitzfeld. "In the career of a coach, there are highs and lows. But at the end of the day, the pendulum always ends up striking on the side of those who deserve it."

Nick Bidwell

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

LIONEL SCALONI
Jorge Sampaoli's former assistant took charge of Argentina after the Russia World Cup. In the summer, he ended his country's 28-year wait for a senior trophy by winning the Copa America.



KJETIL KNUTSEN
Winning the Norwegian league in 2020 was not enough for the Bodo/Glimt boss; in 2021, the journey has continued with another title bid and a European campaign, notably beating Roma 6-1.

CHRISTOPHE GALTIER
As Lille coach, Galtier defied all the odds by beating Paris Saint-Germain to the Ligue 1 title before leaving the club in the summer to join Nice, who are flying high and competing for a Champions League spot.

PLAYER

EDOUARD MENDY

A Champions League-winning and trailblazing goalkeeper

Unbeatable... Mendy celebrates a man-of-the-match display v Brentford

The list of African goalkeepers to play in the Premier League is a short one. Between them, Bruce Grobbelaar (Zimbabwe), Richard Kingson (Ghana) and Carl Ikeme (Nigeria) made 92 appearances in the competition. Of that trio, only the former can claim to have had a major impact on English football, accounting for two thirds of those appearances – although his peak came in the 1980s before the Premier League was formed. Kingson was a back-up at Birmingham City, Blackpool and Wigan Athletic, while Ikeme was Wolverhampton Wanderers' long-serving understudy, playing only one top-flight game.

It is fair to say, then, that Senegal's Edouard Mendy can already claim to be the finest African goalkeeper that the Premier League has ever seen.

And that has huge significance. As Rory Smith wrote in the *New York Times* last year: "Black goalkeepers are chronically underrepresented in European soccer. African ones are even more uncommon." Mendy is bucking the trend, and becoming a trailblazer for other black and African goalkeepers.

When Chelsea recruited him at the start of the 2020-21 season, they insisted he was brought in to provide competition for then-record signing Kepa Arrizabalaga. In reality, he quickly became the undisputed first choice. After making his debut at the end of September, he kept six consecutive clean sheets in all competitions. By the end of 2020, he had only conceded ten goals in 18 games for his new club.

That form continued into 2021. Mendy ended the season with 16 Premier League clean sheets, second only to Ederson of Manchester City. In the Champions League, not only did he keep more clean sheets than any other goalkeeper, he also matched the competition's all-time record, with nine.

That tally, of course, included the final itself. In Porto, Chelsea's well-organised defensive shape, the midfield screen provided by man of the match N'Golo Kante, and Manchester City's toothlessness meant the Senegalese keeper had relatively little to do, only making one save on the night. Yet just as he had done all season, he brought a calmness and assuredness that had been sorely lacking under his predecessor.

He also made history, becoming the first African goalkeeper to start a European Cup final since Grobbelaar in 1985, and only the third in history to be on the winning side, following the Zimbabwean (1984) and Benfica's Mozambique-born shot-stopper, Costa Pereira (1961 and 1962).

This season has continued in much the same way as the last one. Thomas Tuchel has built one of the tightest defences in European football, with Mendy an integral part of it. By the start of December, Chelsea had only conceded six goals – the fewest in the Premier League – with Mendy joint-top of the clean sheets chart with Ederson and Alisson.

Incidentally, the Brazilian pair have done plenty to banish misconceptions about their country's ability to produce world-class goalkeepers. Mendy, it seems, is well on the way to doing the same for African keepers.

Jamie Evans

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

PEDRI
2021 was an exhausting year for the teenager, who became undroppable for both club and country. Won Euro 2020's Young Player of the Tournament, and the Golden Boy and Kopa Trophies.

BEN BRERETON DIAZ
Stoke-born Brereton's call-up to the Chile national team for the Copa America was one of the most remarkable stories of the year. He has gone on to score twice in four World Cup qualifiers, too.

EMILE SMITH ROWE
A breakthrough year for the Arsenal starlet saw him handed the No.10 shirt at the Emirates and an England debut. Despite his tender years, he has played a massive role in rejuvenating the Gunners.

PLAYER

SIMON KJAER

Denmark captain an inspirational figure on and off the pitch

Purely in terms of sporting accomplishments, 2021 was a vintage affair for the 32-year-old Milan and Denmark central defensive warrior: steady as a rock as his club sealed their first Champions League qualification since 2013, then skippering the Danish national team to a highly satisfying last-four berth at the Euro 2020 finals.

But much more significantly, he showed himself to be an outstanding human being, reacting with calmness, clarity and empathy when Denmark team-mate Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest during a European Championship tie against Finland in June.

Kjaer was indeed a lifesaver on that afternoon in Copenhagen, quickly realising the gravity of the situation, putting Eriksen in the recovery position, ensuring his airways were cleared and starting CPR prior to medics arriving on the scene. In an emblematic moment of football embracing humanity, Kjaer also encouraged his team-mates to form a protective ring around Eriksen as he was treated with a defibrillator and resuscitated. Kjaer the guardian angel, Kjaer the sentinel, Kjaer the compassionate, on hand to offer comfort on the pitch to Eriksen's partner, Sabrina Kvist Jensen.

That day in Copenhagen, Kjaer was a leader in every sense of the word and rightly – along with on-site and Danish federation medical staff – was awarded the UEFA President's Award for 2021. "Kjaer: a reason for pride," ran the headline in the *Diario de Sevilla*, a newspaper located in the Spanish city where Kjaer used to play.

True to his down-to-earth character, the much-travelled stopper – who in a nomadic career has worn the colours of no fewer than nine pro teams, including Palermo, Wolfsburg, Lille, Roma and Fenerbahce – insists on shunning the individual accolades. "I'm not a hero," he explained to the Italian sports daily *Corriere dello Sport* in August. "I acted without thinking. My instincts guided me and I did what I had to do automatically. It's what anyone else would have done. This is the first time this sort of thing has happened to me. I hope it's the last.

"I was able to stay lucid, like all my team-mates. It was the work of the whole team. Obviously we would have done the same if it had been an opponent. That's it. The only thing that matters is that Christian is now OK. Only that's important."

One of the 30-strong shortlist for the 2021 Ballon d'Or award, Kjaer is living proof that there's always hope in difficult times. Before moving to Milan in January 2020, his career appeared to be in a cul-de-sac, only serving as a back-up for the likes of Atalanta and Sevilla. Now reborn and reinvigorated at the San Siro, he recently extended his contract with the *Rossoneri* until 2024 and fully expects to end his playing days in Lombardy. "2021 has been a crazy year for me. Milan are on the up and Denmark did well at the Euros and have qualified for the next World Cup. It's been a great time in my career and I wouldn't have achieved if I hadn't come to Milan."

Nick Bidwell

Inspirational leader...Kjaer

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

JOSH CAVALLO
The Adelaide United and Australia left-back recently came out as gay, the only current top-flight male professional to have done so. "All I want to do is play football and be treated equally," he declared.

JORDAN HENDERSON
The Liverpool skipper was awarded an MBE "for services to football and charity, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic", having led Premier League players in donating to the NHS.

SEBASTIEN THILL
On target with the winner in Sheriff Tiraspol's stunning Champions League upset of giants Real Madrid at the Bernabeu in September, the attacking midfielder, 27, is the first Luxembourg player to score in the competition.

PLAYER

SEBASTIEN HALLER

West Ham misfit makes headlines in Champions League and Africa

For Sebastien Haller, 2021 began by crawling out of a deep valley, but ended at the top of a mountain, the height of which he had never reached before.

Who would have thought everything would turn out so well when West Ham United offloaded the French-born striker in January after only 18 months? Their £45 million record signing struggled to adapt to the Premier League and was ultimately usurped by Michail Antonio as the Hammers' first-choice striker.

Haller was happy to join Ajax in a €22.5m deal and reunite with Erik ten Hag, the man who coached him at FC Utrecht. In return, the Amsterdam club were satisfied that they had found a top striker to dovetail with Dusan Tadic in their Europa League campaign.

However, that satisfaction soon turned to despair, when Haller was mistakenly omitted from Ajax's Europa League squad list. A computer error, it was said; human error is more likely – team manager Jan Siemerink simply forgot to add an extra name.

It was an error that would cost them dearly. The record-breaking signing, the last piece of the European jigsaw, wasn't allowed to play, and Ajax were knocked out by Roma in the quarter-finals.

Haller scored 13 domestic goals as Ajax won the double, but his focus was always on making his mark on Europe.

This season, he has more than made up for lost time. On his Champions League debut, he scored four against Sporting – the first player to do so since Marco van Basten at Milan in 1992.

And he remained on fire, becoming only the second player (along with Cristiano Ronaldo) to score in every Champions League group game in a single campaign, while he also became the first footballer in history to score in each of his first six Champions League appearances, as Ajax clinched qualification with time to spare.

Prolific...Haller celebrates one of his Champions League goals

Despite these numbers, Haller still has other people to convince; not everybody thinks he is big-league material – including Didier Deschamps.

At the end of 2020, Haller – who competed for France at the Under-17 World Cup in 2011 – declared for Ivory Coast, where his mother was born.

Just like the Champions League, he was an instant hit. After scoring on his debut against Madagascar in November 2020, he was on target twice in a crucial World Cup qualifier against Cameroon in September. With three goals in eight caps he is already shaping up to be Didier Drogba's successor.

Opting for the African country instead of playing alongside Kylian Mbappe or Antoine Griezmann? Haller has no regrets: "I'm not giving up anything – I did not go to the A-team and I do not regret this choice at all," he told *France Football*. "I'm glad I didn't go because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to reach Ivory Coast."

Since that costly admin error, Haller's career has been on the rise, and there's plenty more to come. In January he will spearhead Ivory Coast's attack as they chase their third AFCON title, before returning to do the same for Ajax in the Champions League. In 2022, he could ascend even greater heights.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

LIONEL MESSI
For Argentina there were tears of joy as he lifted his first major international trophy; for Barcelona there were tears of despair as he was forced out of the club that he loved.

GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA
The 22-year-old keeper won the Euros, was voted the official Player of the Tournament and joined Paris Saint-Germain on a free transfer. Quite the year for Gigio.

MASON MOUNT
Were it not for a couple of missed penalties, Mount may have replaced his Chelsea team-mate Jorginho as the UEFA Player of the Year, as a European champion for both club and country.

WOMEN

BEV PRIESTMAN

Gold medal-winning coach getting the recognition she deserves

Enjoying the limelight... Priestman

Bev Priestman's journey to Olympic gold began as a 12-year-old attending futsal sessions in her native northeast England. The classes were run by John Herdman, a part-time university lecturer, who combined the sessions with teaching sports science and coaching Sunderland youth teams.

Herdman's most high-profile graduate was Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson, but his real protégé is Priestman. Now, they work alongside each other in Canada; Herdman coaching the men's team to a rare tilt at World Cup qualification, and Priestman leading a women's team that ended years of near-misses by winning the Tokyo Olympic football tournament.

It is a long way from Consett to Canada, especially via New Zealand, which is where Priestman joined Herdman as his assistant for the international women's team. Having played briefly at Everton she realised she wouldn't make a top-class player; coaching offered an alternative route.

In four and a half years in New Zealand she learned a lot about coaching, before following Herdman to Canada, working with the youth programme and assisting the national team as they won a second consecutive bronze medal at the 2016 Olympics.

In 2018 Herdman took charge of Canada Men's team, and Priestman returned to England as Phil Neville's assistant with the Lionesses.

"The best thing I did was go back to England and work with Phil," she said later. "It was important to experience different ideas and a different way of working. But I wouldn't be here without the support I had from John."

The pair steered England to the 2019 World Cup semi-finals, but when Neville quit to coach David Beckham's Inter Miami, Priestman was overlooked as his replacement.

Back she went to Canada, arriving as first choice with the message: "We need to change the colour of the medal."

Nine months later Canada arrived in Japan with a reputation of being hard to beat but, with the great Christine Sinclair finally on the wane, struggling for goals.

That turned out not to matter. Four goals, one win, three draws and a successful penalty shootout took them to the semi-finals, where they faced the old foe from across the 49th parallel.

Jessie Fleming's penalty sent the US to a 1-0 defeat, Canada's first victory in the fixture for 20 years. Fleming also scored from the spot in the final with Sweden, another 1-1 draw. The Chelsea midfielder, like so many of the team a youth international under Priestman, kept her nerve again as Canada won the penalty shootout. The colour of the medal was now gold.

"She instilled this belief and bravery that maybe we hadn't had in the past," said Sinclair afterwards of Priestman.

For the quietly determined 35-year-old, the final was as status-altering as for any of her players.

"When I arrived back in Canada people were stopping me in the street and paying for meals," she said. "It feels like my life's changed overnight but it feels really, really good."

Glenn Moore

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

CHRISTINE SINCLAIR
Not only was Sinclair the captain of Priestman's gold medal-winning side, she also became the first player ever to pass 300 international caps, and won three trophies with Portland Thorns in 2021.

FRAN KIRBY
Kirby was named Women's Footballer of the Year by both the PFA and the FWA after overcoming pericarditis to fire Chelsea to the WSL title and Champions League final, with 25 goals.

KENNY SHIELS
Northern Ireland Women will play in their first-ever major tournament at this year's European Championship finals in England, thanks to their experienced 65-year-old manager.

BROADCASTER

GARY NEVILLE

One of the most influential and authoritative voices in English football

On Sunday April 18, *The Times* reported that six English clubs – Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur – had agreed to take part in a new European league, alongside three teams each from Italy and Spain. This "Super League", it was revealed, would eventually involve 20 teams, with the 12 original founders assured of permanent membership.

In the UK, the reaction was immediate, and explosive. Fans of all clubs – both inside and outside the big six – were quick to express their anger, with many heading straight to stadiums to make their feelings known.

Within television, the reaction was similarly vociferous. Speaking from the gantry of Old Trafford, Gary Neville was incandescent: "I'm a Manchester United fan and have been for 40 years of my life, but I'm disgusted, absolutely disgusted," he said.

"There are 100-odd years of football in this country with fans that have lived and loved these clubs, and they need protecting. The fans need protecting.

"Make no mistake about it, this is the biggest sport in the world, the biggest sport in this country and it's a criminal act against the fans, simple as that."

That evening, the European Super League clubs put out a statement confirming their intentions. The following day, Neville appeared on *Monday Night Football* alongside Jamie Carragher. Their tone had not calmed.

"We have to now mobilise, organise," said Neville. "Everybody's got to come behind this. Forget allegiances, forget who you support, we've got to come together to stop this proposal.

"We must all come together because this is an attack on the integrity of our national sport and it must be stopped."

Carragher also called for unity:

Authoritative... Gary Neville

"I think these clubs think this is a done deal; I don't think it is. I think supporters up and down this country can stop this.

"Football fans get together, all of us, in TV, pundits, players, managers, get together and stop this because it can be stopped. I'm convinced of it.

"This cannot be allowed to happen."

By the end of Tuesday, all six Premier League teams had withdrawn their involvement from the proposal.

The interventions of Neville and Carragher did not save the day, but they became the public faces of fans' opposition. While ex-players can, at times, be accused of being out of touch, the two former defenders used their platform to articulate the popular mood of fans across the country. Neville's initial reaction was one of the most-watched videos of 2021 on the Sky Sports Football YouTube channel, second only to Cristiano Ronaldo's Manchester United return.

As a member of the "Our Beautiful Game" group, Neville has already led calls for fundamental reforms in the way that English football is run, including the introduction of an independent regulator.

The ESL proposals caused him to step up his efforts and, if anything is to be achieved in 2022 following the fan-led review (page 10-11), he is sure to be at the heart of it.

Jamie Evans

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

ALLY McCOIST
In 2021, McCoist demonstrated why he is the nation's favourite co-commentator: clear and insightful analysis, combined with sheer joy at being paid to watch the game he so clearly loves.

ALEX SCOTT
Another ground-breaking year for the former Arsenal and England defender saw her become the first woman to be named FSA pundit of the year, as well as taking charge of the BBC's Football Focus.

EMMA HAYES
Hayes' biggest achievement in 2021 was winning the WSL with Chelsea, but she also entered the wider football consciousness with her incisive tactical analysis as a television pundit during Euro 2020.

ADMINISTRATOR

VICTOR MONTAGLIANI

Could the CONCACAF president be a future head of FIFA?

The weight of the pandemic-prompted crisis in world football and the headline-busting fuss over a World Cup every two years has overshadowed an intriguing development within the corridors of power: the rise and rise of Victor Montagliani.

The 56-year-old Canadian is the president who has had to rebuild scandal-shattered CONCACAF and has become, along the way, one of the most trusted allies of FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

This is no surprise. Montagliani's family came from Italy, like Infantino. His father was an Internazionale fan, like Infantino. He was an enthusiastic amateur player, like Infantino. Now Montagliani's status as a FIFA vice-president makes him a key member of Infantino's inner circle.

The FIFA Bureau is chaired by Infantino, and comprises the presidents of the six regional confederations. This is where world football's day-to-day power now resides; FIFA Council has been largely reduced to the bureau's rubber stamp.

Montagliani's journey to the top of football's power tables began in 2005 when he became president of the British Columbia Soccer Association. Here he established a reputation as his own man by supporting local Sikh players who had been barred by local officials from wearing a patka (sports option for a turban).

In 2012 he stepped up as president of the Canadian Soccer Association. He chaired the local organising committees for Canada's hosting of the Women's Under-20 World Cup in 2014 and the senior Women's World Cup in 2015. That was when he first proposed a bid for the 2026 Men's World Cup.

He continued to raise his own profile as a member of the FIFA reform commission headed by Swiss lawyer Francois Carrard. A fellow member was Infantino.

During this time, CONCACAF virtually collapsed. Jack Warner had run for cover in 2011, before successors Jeff Webb and Alfredo Hawit were claimed by the US Justice Department's FIFA-Gate inquiry.

Head of CONCACAF... Montagliani alongside the CONCACAF Champions League trophy ahead of the final in October

After seeing off Bermuda's Larry Mussenden 25-16 in the final voting, Montagliani acknowledged that resurrecting and cleaning up CONCACAF would be "a long road," but he wasted no time setting out on that journey.

CONCACAF signed a new marketing partnership with Soccer United Marketing, the commercial arm of MLS, and expanded its club competitions, while Montagliani also kicked off what evolved into the joint-bid by Canada, Mexico and the US to host the 2026 World Cup.

In 2017 Montagliani chaired the football stakeholders commission, which acquired a crucial role in managing the worldwide game's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, as football staggered back into action, Montagliani stood dutifully behind Infantino in opposing the Super League.

Not that Montagliani is an Infantino puppet: on the proposals for a World Cup every two years he has sat on the fence. The Canadian said he had an "open mind" and a CONCACAF statement added: "Now is not the time to sow fear." Instead his focus has been on leading the technical inspections of the 2026 venue cities.

Onward and upward. Montagliani is a true son of Vancouver with its city motto: By Sea Land and Air We Prosper.

Keir Radnedge

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

NASSER AL KHELAIFI
The ill-fated Super League plans were undoubtedly harmed by PSG's refusal to take part. Their chairman's reward was to become chair of the European Club Association, with a seat on the UEFA exco.

OYVIND ALAPNES
The protest and boycott threats against the Qatar World Cup, following The Guardian's report on the number of deaths in stadium construction, have been spearheaded by the Tromso CEO.

MARINA GRANOVSKAIA
As director of Chelsea, the Russian oversaw Champions League finals for both the men and women's teams, plus a WSL title, while also bringing in over £130m in transfer fees.

FAREWELL TO...

Colin Bell
The "King of the Kippax" was the star of the Manchester City side that won the league title, FA Cup, two League Cups and the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Gustavo Pena
Mexico defender who captained his country on home soil at the 1970 World Cup, and went on to win 82 caps.

Peter Swan
Won 19 England caps at centre-half, yet infamously missed out on the 1966 World Cup after receiving an eight-year ban from football in 1962.

Luton Shelton
With 35 goals, Shelton is Jamaica's all-time top scorer. A nomadic career saw him play in Jamaica, Sweden, England, Norway, Denmark, Turkey and Russia.

Jozef Venglos
Became the first non-British or Irish person to take charge of an English top-flight club after taking the Aston Villa job, as well as the first-ever Slovakia coach after their independence in 1993.

Tony Collins
The first-ever black manager in the history of English league football, having taken charge of Rochdale in 1959. Later worked as a scout for England.

Glenn Roeder
An England coach under Glenn Hoddle, Roeder went on to manage West Ham and Newcastle in the Premier League.

Ian St John
One of the most significant players in Liverpool's rise from the Second Division in the 1960s, having scored the goals that fired them to promotion and then the First Division title. His on-field partnership with Roger Hunt was prolific, before forming another famous partnership after retiring, hosting the *Saint and Greavsie* show.

Peter Lorimer
Leeds United's record scorer in all comps – with 238 goals in 705 games – and a mainstay in the side that won two league titles, an FA Cup, League Cup and two Fairs Cups between 1968 and 1974.

Jimmy Greaves... goal machine

Frank Worthington
A gifted footballer who crammed over 800 appearances across 22 consecutive Football League seasons from 1966 to 1987. Won eight England caps and the First Division Golden Boot in 1978-79.

Willy van der Kuijlen
The Eredivisie's all-time top scorer with 311 goals, starting with five on his PSV debut aged 17. Won 22 Netherlands caps and has a statue outside PSV's stadium.

Georgi Dimitrov
A Bulgaria legend who won 77 caps, including 56 as captain, and led the side to the last 16 of Mexico '86.

Tarcisio Burgnich
A mainstay of the Inter side that won back-to-back European Cups under Helenio Herrera's *Catenaccio* system, the Italy defender also won Euro '68 and played at three World Cups.

Paul Mariner
Scored for Ipswich Town in their UEFA Cup final win in 1981, and netted 13 goals in 35 games for England, appearing at Euro '80 and the 1982 World Cup.

Terry Cooper
Widely considered the best left-back in the world at the 1970 World Cup, and an integral member of the Leeds United side of the same era. Without breaking his leg aged 26 he would have won many more than 20 England caps.

Gerd Muller
A legend for both Germany (having scored in the victorious 1974 World Cup final) and Bayern Munich, for whom he is still the all-time leading goalscorer.

Gerd Muller... *"Der bomber"*

Jimmy Greaves
Quite possibly the finest goalscorer English football has every produced. Remains the highest scorer in English top-flight history, with 357 goals, as well as Tottenham's record marksman. Struck 44 goals from 57 England caps, but was injured for the 1966 World Cup final.

Wilfried van Moer
Known as the "Little General", he won the Belgian Golden Shoe three times and 57 international caps, starring in the team that reached the Euro '80 final.

Jean-Pierre Adams
The France defender won 22 caps, but his career was brought to a tragic end by a trainee anaesthetist, who caused his brain to be starved of oxygen during knee surgery. Adams subsequently spent the last 39 years of his life in a coma.

Roger Hunt
England's top scorer in the 1966 World Cup group stage, Hunt led Alf Ramsey's attack for every minute of the victorious campaign. Remains Liverpool's record scorer in the league with 244 goals.

Bernard Tapie
The chairman behind Marseille's success of the late '80s and early '90s, winning four league titles, two French Cups and the Champions League before being found guilty of attempted match-fixing.

Walter Smith
Legendary Rangers manager, leading the club to ten top-flight league titles, five Scottish Cups and six League Cups across two spells at the club.

Gerald Sinstadt
One of the defining voices of British sport in the 20th century, who commentated at four World Cups from 1970 to 1982.

Ron Flowers
A non-playing member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad, earning 49 caps for the Three Lions, as well as playing 515 games for Wolves.

Glenn Moore

Africa's first female club champions

Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa win the inaugural CAF Women's Champions League

The celebrations were ecstatic. Dancing, singing, flag-waving, badge-kissing, players and staff jumping into each other's arms and giving thanks to God. Through floods of tears Andisiwe Mgcoyi said: "I'm just so emotional because this is the one we wanted."

The Mamelodi Sundown Ladies striker was talking about the inaugural African Champions League, which the South African team had just won in Cairo, defeating Hasaacas Ladies, of Ghana, 2-0.

Around the world, just as in the men's game, federations are following UEFA in creating a women's Champions League (with the exception of South America, where the Copa Libertadores Feminina began in 2009).

The aim is to provide a platform and inspiration for women's teams, leading to rising standards, interest and investment.

The African competition began with 33 clubs drawn from the 55 federation members, divided into six regionally-based qualifying zones. The West African Zone produced two qualifiers by dint of the Women's AFCON holders, Nigeria, being from the region – appropriately the beneficiary was Nigeria's Rivers Angels.

The seven qualifiers were joined by Egyptian champions Wadi Degla, who hosted the final tournament.

a ten-match campaign during which they had scored 24 goals and conceded one, winning eight games and losing none. They could justifiably claim to be Africa's best, emulating the success of Sundowns men's team in 2016.

While Africa is up-and-running the Asian equivalent is planned to launch in 2023. In the meantime a small series of regional pilot tournaments are being staged.

The first, in 2019, featured clubs from the leading powers in Asian women's football: South Korea, Japan, China and Australia, all World Cup regulars. Hosted in the South Korean city of Yongin it was won by Tokyo's Verdy Beleza.

The pandemic meant there was no competition in 2020 and also stymied a proposed East Zone event in 2021 between teams from Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and Taiwan – no host could be found.

Jordan, however, were happy to stage the West Zone tournament featuring Amman, Bunyodkor, Gokulam Kerala and Shahrdari Sirjan, respectively champions of Jordan, Uzbekistan, India and Iran.

This quartet played a six-match round robin from which the hosts emerged triumphant despite losing to bottom-club Bunyodkor. This underlined the evenness of a competition in which five matches were won by a single goal.

> "I'm just so emotional because this is the one we wanted"
>
> Andisiwe Mgcoyi, Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies

They were in Group A alongside Hasaacas, AS Mande (Mali) and Malabo Kings (Equatorial Guinea). Group B featured Sundowns, River Angels, AS FAR (Morocco) and Vihiga Queens (Kenya).

Sundowns reached the final beating Malabo Kings on penalties after a goalless draw. Hasaacas defeated AS FAR 2-1, with the winner coming from Evelyn Badu, the tournament's top scorer and star player.

In the final Mgcoyi set up Chuene Morifi in the 33rd minute, then scored herself in the 65th. Victory completed

The Asian Football Confederation hopes to stage another tournament in 2022 and is to bring in the AFC Women's Club Licensing System with minimum criteria to compete in the women's Asian Champions League proposed for 2023.

Former Chinese international Bai Lili, AFC's head of women's football, said the competition and licensing requirements would together be a significant boost to the women's game in the region leading to higher standards of organisation and more opportunity for players.

The big question is whether to copy

Captain... Zanele Nhlapho

the men's format, which has separate competitions for the East and West Zones, and a final between the two winners.

The problem, as Bai notes, is "development levels are uneven. Teams in East Asia are relatively strong, while in other regions they still have their work cut out. The biggest job for us is to bridge the gap."

In practice this is likely to mean whoever wins the East Zone would easily win the final, but playing fixtures across the vast, sprawling AFC region could be prohibitively expensive.

CONCACAF plans to launch a continental club tournament in 2023 or 2024. Though this is likely to be dominated in the initial years by American clubs, rapid progress is being made in Mexico and it is hoped that the existence of such a competition will spur development in Olympic champions Canada as well as nations such as Costa Rica and Jamaica.

Further south the 13th edition of the Copa Libertadores Femenina took place in Paraguay in November 2021, with the exception of the final, which was staged in Uruguay.

Champions... Sundowns celebrate with the inaugural CAF Women's CL trophy

The 16-team tournament was won for the third time in five years by Brazil's Corinthians, with a 24-2 goal difference, though 13 of those goals came in two matches against group and semi-final opponents Nacional, of Uruguay.

Colombia's Santa Fe, who had seen off defending champions Ferroviaria in the other semi-final, on penalties, were the beaten finalists. This maintained the competition's historical trend: Brazilian clubs have dominated, between them winning ten titles out of 13.

In Oceania, though the men's Champions League dates back to 1987, there is no immediate sign of a women's version. A spur may be provided should a women's Club World Cup, which has been discussed at FIFA since 2013, actually become a reality.

In the vacuum there have been several private tournaments, though none of a global nature. For better or worse FIFA's involvement may well depend on what happens with the mooted expansion of their men's competition.

South American champs...Corinthians won their third title

Round-up

Champions... Washington Spirit

WASHINGTON SHOW SPIRIT AS DAMES IS FIRED

Washington Spirit ended a tough season, for team and league, by winning the NWSL title in Houston with a 2-1 extra-time victory over Chicago Red Stars in the play-off final.

It was Spirit's first title and came at the end of a campaign in which coach Richie Burke was fired following a league investigation into allegations of mistreating players.

That exacerbated a splintering of the ownership group, with players, fans and one owner calling for Spirit owner Steve Baldwin to quit as CEO. Two games were then forfeited due to a COVID outbreak.

The blows galvanised the aptly named Spirit and, under acting coach Kris Ward, they came through the expanded play-off format. Defending champions North Carolina Courage and regular season runners-up OL Reign were beaten en route to the final, with Trinity Rodman (the teenage daughter of former NBA star Dennis Rodman) the break-out star.

Portland Thorns won the regular campaign, a farewell present for Mark Parsons, who has taken charge of the Netherlands. Rhian Wilkinson, who won 181 Canada caps as a player and has been assistant coach to both England and Canada, replaces him.

In a post-script which sadly summed up NWSL's season, within days of its conclusion Red Stars' Rory Dames became the fifth coach to depart under a cloud after the *Washington Post* published allegations of bullying players during his decade-long reign as manager.

Expansion teams Angel City, of Los Angeles, and San Diego Wave will join NWSL next year. After a chastening summer the league could certainly do with some sunny Californian optimism.

Sacked... Scott Booth

WSL SACKINGS MOUNT UP

Birmingham City and Leicester City fired Scott Booth and Jonathan Morgan respectively as pressure on managers in England's Women's Super League intensified. Former Birmingham City midfielder Darren Carter was the interim for Booth, while England youth coach Lydia Bedford took over at Leicester.

SOUR END FOR BRAZIL LEGEND

Formiga finally called time on an incredible 26-year international career, spanning seven Olympics and seven World Cups. But there was a sour note as Brazil coach Pia Sundhage left the 43-year-old on the bench until the last 15 minutes of the 6-1 win over India, on the basis that "she is not in the future of the national team." Formiga's mother, who is scared of flying, had flown to Manaus to see her play for Brazil for the first time. The veteran midfielder will continue playing for Sao Paolo.

WOMEN'S FA CUP FINAL

Cup winners ...Chelsea celebrate

Chelsea completed a 2020-21 domestic treble when they won the delayed Women's FA Cup final, beating Arsenal 3-0 with an early goal from England's Fran Kirby, followed by a second-half brace from Australia's Sam Kerr. The 51st final, held exactly 100 years after the FA banned women's football, attracted 40,942 supporters inside Wembley, with a 1.5 million UK TV audience.

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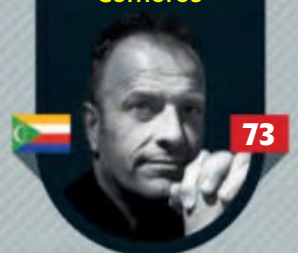
Comoros



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Al Hilal win a record fourth AFC Champions League title

The month in numbers

The facts and stats that have caught our eye in the world of football this month...

12,843

Attendance of November's game between Notts County and Solihull Moors in England's fifth tier – a new National League record.

8

Number of European clubs fined by UEFA for FFP breaches – Astana, CFR Cluj, CSKA Sofia, Mons Calpe, Porto, Real Betis, Santa Clara and Sporting.

30

Champions League goals for Kylian Mbappe – the youngest player, at the age of 22 years and 352 days, to hit the milestone.

Fined...Jude Bellingham

€40,000

Fine handed to Jude Bellingham by the German Football Association after his remarks about ref Felix Zwayer following Dortmund's 3-2 *Klassiker* defeat to Bayern Munich.

9

Points deducted from Derby County for admitting breaches of EFL accounting rules, in addition to the 12 they were already docked for entering administration. Fellow Championship side Reading were also deducted six points for breaching financial rules.

222

Senior Uruguay games managed by Oscar Tabarez – a world record for a single international team.

15,000

The maximum attendance allowed inside Bundesliga stadiums in Germany after new measures to stop coronavirus spreading.

50

Premier League goals scored by Chris Wood after his effort v Crystal Palace – the first New Zealand player to reach the landmark.

5

Substitutes per team per game, which may become a permanent change to the laws of football following IFAB's latest AGM, with a decision due in March.

€193,500

Fine for PAOK, as well as a four-game spectator ban, after fans invaded the pitch following their 1-0 loss to Aris.

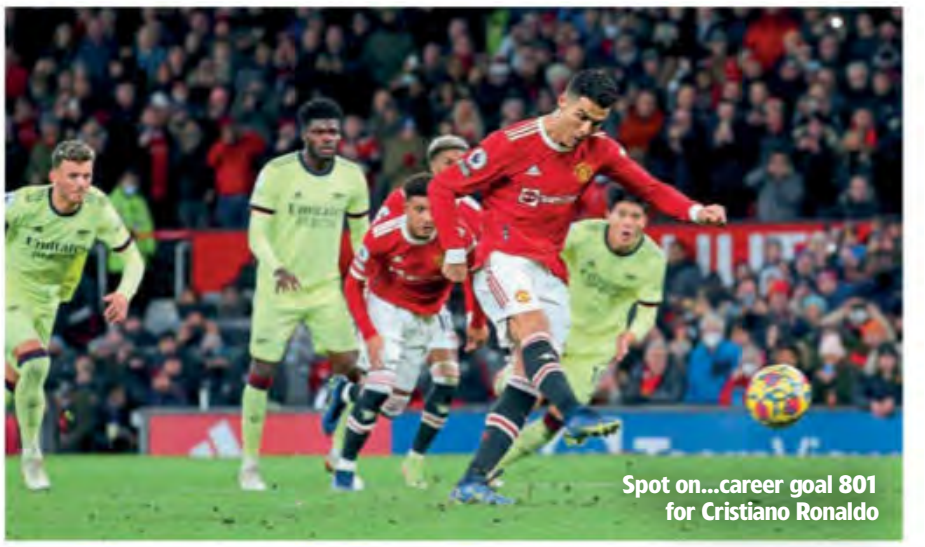
34

Hours that two Tottenham fans took to travel to see their team play against Burnley – only for the clash to be postponed by snow.

50

Years since Atletico Mineiro last won the Brazilian title, a wait that was brought to an end in December.

Brazilian champions... Atletico Mineiro



Spot on...career goal 801 for Cristiano Ronaldo

800

The milestone passed by Cristiano Ronaldo for club and country goals after his double against Arsenal.

2

Points docked from Serie C side Catania for failing to keep up payment of their player wages.

20

Seconds before Ricard Fernandez – also known as Cucu – was sent off in Andorra's 4-1 World Cup qualifying defeat to Poland.

50

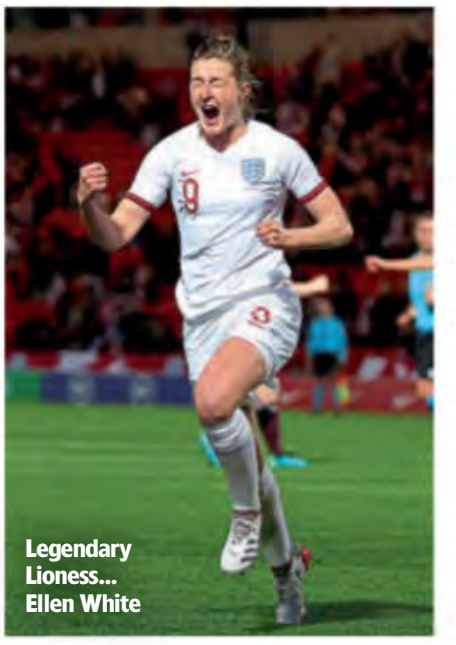
Bundesliga goals for Erling Haaland by the end of November, reaching the tally in both the fewest games and at the youngest age.

199

Margin of victory earned by Barcelona and Spain midfielder Pedri in the voting for the 2021 Golden Boy award – an all-time record points haul.

48

International goals scored by Ellen White for England Women, beating Kelly Smith's previous Lionesses' record of 46, which she set in the 20-0 demolition of Latvia.



Legendary Lioness... Ellen White

50

Premier League goals that Newcastle United have conceded against players who have previously played for them in the competition – the most of any side since its inception in 1992-93.

Comoros

STEVE MENARY

Comoros...inside the changing room during a FIFA Arab Cup qualifier

Heroes on the pitch, chaos off the pitch

The Comoros Islands achieved historic success by qualifying for the Africa Cup of Nations finals against a domestic backdrop of controversy, upheaval and infighting

Amir Abdou's success in securing a maiden Africa Cup of Nations finals qualification for the Comoros Islands is all the more remarkable given this was achieved against a background of domestic turmoil.

While Abdou's squad of largely overseas-based players were securing a place at the latest AFCON tournament in Cameroon, football back on the Indian Ocean archipelago of less than 900,000 people was descending into chaos.

Said Ali Said Athouman had been appointed as president of the Football Federation of the Comoros (FFC) back in February 2018 to help bring stability after his predecessor, Tourqui Salim, quit three months earlier amidst allegations of a match-fixing scandal.

As Abdou's team flourished on the pitch, off the pitch Athouman's reign was punctuated by controversy that ultimately led to the suspension of the FFC just 18 months after he took over.

What allegedly brought Athouman's downfall – according to *Josimar* magazine – was his decision to nominate his old club Volcan to play in the lucrative Arab Club Champions Cup (UAFA) instead of domestic league champions Fomboni.

> **While Abdou's squad of largely overseas-based players were securing a place at the latest AFCON tournament in Cameroon, football back on the Indian Ocean archipelago of less than 900,000 people was descending into chaos**

FFC president...Athouman is congratulated by Infantino after his re-election

Fomboni reported the president to the FFC's ethics committee, who banned Athouman. Fomboni ultimately earned $20,000 after taking part in the 2019-20 UAFA, but Athouman responded by dissolving the ethics committee.

This crisis led to FIFA sending in a normalisation committee to run the game on the islands. The committee, CoNor, was sent in to revise the FFC's statutes and those for the three leagues played on Grande Comore, Moheli and Anjouan, and the election of a new president.

The committee's mandate was due to expire on September 30, 2020, but work took far longer than expected, in part due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With transport cancelled between the islands, one member of CoNor, Adfaon Hamada Bacar, was unable to leave Moheli and another member, Fakriddine Youssouf Abdoulhalik, died from COVID.

Only three of the five CoNor members were able to supervise the election, but FIFA dispatched Veron Mosengo-Omba, the chief member associations officer, at the height of the pandemic to oversee the process earlier this year.

Mosengo-Omba has overseen the installation of normalisation committees in other unruly FIFA members, such as Cameroon and Namibia, and the result of the election in the Comoros was no surprise.

CoNor ruled out two other candidates, Said Abdallah Salim, chairman of Rapide Club de Moroni, and Mahmoud Aboud, a former Comoros ambassador to China and to the USA, due to the eligibility of some of their sponsors.

The only remaining candidate was Athouman, who is widely viewed as a supporter of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, and Mosengo-Omba was able to oversee his coronation on January 30, when control was handed back to the FFC. "Our presence brings the normalisation committee to an end, now that it has completed its mission," said Mosengo-Omba.

Athouman's position seems more secure than ever as a few weeks later, Mosengo-Omba left FIFA to take over the role of general secretary at the Confederation of African Football, bringing a key ally for Athouman even closer to the Comoros.

Europe

KEIR RADNEDGE

Play-offs beckon for big guns

One of Portugal and Italy, the last two European champions, will miss out on a place in Qatar

Upset...Serbia pipped Portugal to top of Group A

Ten down, three to go. Most of Europe's World Cup hopefuls know they will be in Qatar next November. European champions Italy and their Portuguese predecessors are the most notable outliers at risk of embarrassment and elimination in the play-offs next March.

Managers of the happy ten must now ponder coping with such a lengthy run-up. Usually the finalists need to merely plot their way through a handful of spring friendlies ahead of the finals in June, making only minor changes to their squads. But a year is a long time in terms of national teams.

Didier Deschamps, coach of world champions France, knows this better than most. He and his colleagues must negotiate Nations League ties in the spring then a handful of friendlies squashed in between a frantically busy club schedule in the autumn.

Deschamps and Co. will not even have the benefit of a two-week pre-finals training camp. League match injuries risk denying them a host of stars at the last minute.

Play-offs beckon... Cristiano Ronaldo's six goals weren't enough to take Portugal through

Hero to zero... *World Soccer* Manager of the Year Mancini

The October qualifiers had seen Germany and then Denmark become the first Europeans to reach the finals. That left everything else to be decided in November.

Belgium, who remain the world's No.1 team after the latest FIFA rankings, secured Group E victory and their place in Qatar with a comfortable 3-1 win over Estonia. Wales would subsequently take the runners-up spot and enter the play-offs. They will be accompanied by third-placed Czech Republic who benefit from the Nations League "escape hatch" along with Austria who finished fourth behind Denmark and improving Scotland in Group F.

France matched Belgium's success with Kylian Mbappe celebrating his first international hat-trick in 32 minutes in an 8-0 Group D destruction of Kazakhstan. Karim Benzema shrugged off the distractions of his long-running court case to score twice. Mbappe, a key figure in 2018, said: "Even for those of us fortunate enough to have won a World Cup, it's still the ultimate dream to play there."

Spain became the fifth European qualifiers when a lone late goal from Alvaro Morata consigned Sweden to the play-offs. Goalkeeper Robin Olsen had tipped Dani Olmo's shot on to the crossbar and Morata was on hand to tap home the rebound. Luis Enrique's men thus qualified for a 12th consecutive World Cup finals.

That same evening the script took an unexpected twist for Spain's Iberian neighbours Portugal. They only needed a home draw against Serbia, and were on course for Qatar even when Dusan Tadic cancelled out Renato Sanches' opener. However half-time substitute Aleksandar Mitrovic headed a dramatic late winner to send Serbia to the finals and shocked Portugal into the play-offs.

Defeat ended Portugal's unbroken winning run in home World Cup qualifiers (ten games) stretching back to October 2013.

No such pain for Croatia, third in Russia, who overtook the 2018 hosts with a 1-0 Group H victory in Split. Luckless defender Fyodor Kudryashov carried the can after deflecting a Borna Sosa cross into his own net with Russia just nine minutes from the finals.

Some 24 hours later and it was injury-hit Italy's turn to fret after a goalless draw in their World Cup jinx city of Belfast. A notorious defeat there had seen Italy miss the 1958 World Cup finals; this time the 0-0 Group C draw at least offered a play-off shot. Italy's attack let them down. They finished their campaign unbeaten but paid the penalty for four draws since their Euro 2020 triumph. Switzerland capitalised to overtake Italy, thumping Bulgaria 4-0.

Netherlands booked their place with a 2-0 Group G home win over Norway thanks to late goals from Steven Bergwijn and Memphis Depay. Coach Louis van Gaal, who led the Dutch to a third-place finish in Brazil in 2014, had to watch from a wheelchair in the stands after injuring a hip in falling off his bicycle the previous weekend.

Defeat was costly for a Norway team missing injured Erling Haaland, with Turkey taking the play-off spot instead. At least Norway's officials and players will be spared their much-discussed dilemma of whether to boycott Qatar over human rights concerns.

England wrapped up their Group I campaign with decisive victories by 5-0 at home to Albania and 10-0 away to San Marino, the world's worst team at 210 in the FIFA rankings. FIFA has 211 members but the Cook Islands are worse off than San Marino only because they do not have an active national side.

Harry Kane's late surge of a hat-trick against Albania and four-goal haul versus San Marino meant he finished as 12-goal joint top scorer in the European section along with Dutchman Depay.

At least Norway's officials and players will be spared their much-discussed dilemma of whether to boycott Qatar over human rights concerns

Number one... Belgium remain top of the FIFA rankings

THE DRAW

The play-off semi-finals take place on March 24 with seeded teams at home. The Path finals take place on March 29.

PATH A

Scotland v Ukraine
Wales v Austria
Wales/Austria v Scotland/Ukraine

PATH B

Russia v Poland
Sweden v Czech Republic
Russia/Poland v Sweden/Czech Rep

PATH C

Italy v North Macedonia
Portugal v Turkey
Portugal/Turkey v Italy/N. Macedonia

Africa

MARK GLEESON

Second round of World Cup qualifying concludes

Ten teams advance to the third round play-offs in March

When the draw for the group phase of the African World Cup qualifiers was made, it was immediately obvious that the heavyweight Group D clash between Cameroon and the Ivory Coast would be the highlight of the campaign, and so it proved the perfect cap to three months of frenetic action.

A boisterous crowd at the new Japoma Stadium in Douala, which will be a focal point of the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations, watched in delight as Lyon's Karl Toko Ekambi slammed home the ball midway through the first half for the game's only goal to ensure top spot in the group for Cameroon.

But it was the goalkeeping of Andre Onana, recently returned from a nine-month drug ban, that proved pivotal for the Indomitable Lions in a massive morale boost before they host the Cup of Nations finals.

Cameroon and Tunisia were the last of the ten group winners to be decided and join the other eight in the March play-offs, where they will be drawn into five knockout ties over two legs with the aggregate winners going on to represent Africa in Qatar.

Morocco and Senegal were the first

Match winner... Cameroon's Karl Toko Ekambi celebrates scoring against Ivory Coast

Perfect record... Morocco won all six of their games

Inspirational...Ghana skipper Andre Ayew

to win their respective groups, with two games to spare – the Moroccans taking full advantage of their "football diplomacy" of recent years.

The country set out to use the game as a diplomatic lever in the dispute over Western Sahara, large parts of which Morocco annexed when Spain gave up the territory in 1976.

Some acknowledge it is now part of Morocco while other countries recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which sits in exile and fights a small liberation struggle.

The impasse led to Morocco spending many years outside of the African Union and since their return they have worked tirelessly to try to sway the debate their way.

In football, the Moroccan federation signed multiple co-operation agreements with other, poorer, African countries, offering training camps, coaching assistance and other aid.

So when the Confederation of African Football (CAF), after inspecting stadia across the continent ahead of the World Cup qualifiers, declared many unsuitable and left several countries "homeless" and in need of an alternate venue, Morocco were quick to offer venues as alternate home grounds – at minimal cost to the "homeless" associations.

Agadir, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Rabat and Tangier were all alternate venues in the qualifiers for the likes of Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Liberia, Mozambique and Mali, who won their group.

Somewhat surprisingly, the three teams in Morocco's own group – Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sudan – also agreed to play there, and it was also a surprise FIFA and CAF allowed this to happen.

It meant Morocco played all six of their Group I matches at home and it was therefore no shock they were the only team who finished with a 100 per cent record.

Coach Vahid Halilhodzic has dramatically overhauled what was an already talented team, kicking out Hakim Ziyech (Chelsea) and Noussair Mazraoui (Ajax) for allegedly refusing to play a warm-up friendly in mid-year. The unheralded Ryan Mmaee emerged as a revelation, having previously played for Belgium at youth level.

It was immediately obvious that the heavyweight Group D clash between Cameroon and the Ivory Coast would be the highlight of the campaign

Senegal, Egypt, Mali and African champions Algeria also ended unbeaten, while Nigeria lost only one game – a shock home defeat to the Central African Republic midway through the campaign, marking their first home loss in a World Cup qualifier since October 1981, when Algeria beat them 2-0 in Lagos.

Under pressure... Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr

Nigeria recovered, and only needed a draw in their last game at home to the tiny Cape Verde Islands to win Group C, yet they almost botched that too despite a first-minute goal from Victor Osimhen. It ended 1-1, heaping added pressure on beleaguered German coach Gernot Rohr.

Controversy reigned as both DR Congo and Ghana won at home to Benin and South Africa respectively in their final group games. Both losing teams appealed to FIFA – South Africa for redress over a disputed Ghana penalty (which was ropey to say the least), and Benin over DR Congo's use of substitutions.

Benin had to avoid defeat in Kinshasa in Group J but were a goal down inside the opening ten minutes after Gabon ref Eric Otogo-Castane awarded a generous penalty to the hosts, a decision that stunned the visitors and bemused the Congolese. DR Congo went on to win 2-0 and come from behind to win Group J.

South Africa also only needed to hold out for a draw but lost to a first-half penalty, converted by captain Andre Ayew, in Ghana. The South African FA compiled an 18-page dossier, which included allegations of "match fixing, match manipulation including corruption and bribery". FIFA agreed to entertain, before later dismissing, both protests.

QUALIFIED TEAMS

The draw for five home-and-away play-off ties will take place on January 26

- Algeria
- Cameroon
- DR Congo
- Egypt
- Ghana
- Mali
- Morocco
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Tunisia

South America

TIM VICKERY

Top two easily through

Brazil and Argentina are safely through to the 2022 World Cup, but everybody else is playing catch up in chaotic schedule

Eight rounds of South America's World Cup qualifiers were crammed in between September and November, by which time Brazil and Argentina were safely over the line, with a whole year ahead to plan for Qatar.

Brazil's stats – 11 wins and two draws – are impressive, although coach Tite's side have not always shown the fluency of the Russia 2018 qualifiers. There are positive signs, though: the consolidation of Lucas Paqueta and his partnership with Neymar, for example, plus the emergence of Raphinha. Most positive of all is that this is a team that very rarely looks in danger of conceding.

Argentina's defence, so suspect in recent times, is also much improved. Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and centre-back Cristian Romero made their debuts as recently as June, but it is already hard to imagine the side without them. In the post-September marathon the team conceded just once – and that was a bizarre VAR penalty.

It was perhaps predictable, then, that the meeting of the giants in Argentina ended goalless. Brazil could probably come away happier from the game – but nobody could come away happy from their aborted meeting in September, when the match was interrupted after five minutes by Brazilian health officials aiming to expel Argentina's Premier League players for breaching COVID protocols. FIFA will have to decide what to do with a game that, happily, will have no bearing on the qualification process.

The fixture pile up – and stress with

Qualified... Brazil and Argentina have both secured their places in Qatar

Impressing...Ecuador are on the verge of qualifying for a fourth World Cup in their last six attempts

European clubs – was the product of the questionable decision to proceed with the Copa America in the summer instead of using the time to catch up on qualifiers.

The effects of the Copa have been felt, most noticeably in three sides: first, Argentina, whose confidence has been boosted by winning a title; secondly, Ecuador – an interesting work in progress under Gustavo Alfaro. Responsibility is being handed to a promising generation, but in the Copa it was clear that they were too open defensively. A counter-attacking specialist, Alfaro has tightened them up. After the Copa they conceded just three goals and picked up 14 points – only Brazil and Argentina did better. A place in Qatar is theirs for the taking.

And then there is Peru, who appear to be following a similar script to the 2018 campaign, when they got off to a dreadful start, regrouped in the 2016 Copa and found the momentum that carried them all the way to Russia. At the start of September, Peru were bottom of the table. But they built on a good Copa and have subsequently picked up 13 points, carrying them to fifth place, the play-off position. This is remarkable work from coach Ricardo Gareca, because Peruvian football is hardly helping. The only new player to break into the first team since 2018 is Gianluca Lapadula, a 31-year-old Italian-born striker who qualified through his mother. Chile are living a similar story with England-born striker Ben Brereton Diaz, adding much needed youth and thrust to an ageing side struggling mightily to get over the line, but with some difficult matches ahead.

Going down 3-0 to Bolivia brought the curtain down on a spell of almost 16 years for Oscar Tabarez

Chile are just behind Peru, who in turn are just behind fourth-placed Colombia, crawling to Qatar one point at a time. In ten rounds under coach Reinaldo Rueda they have only been beaten once – but have won just twice. They have now gone an extraordinary five games without scoring. After a year out, James Rodriguez was recalled in November. Colombia will need him close to full fitness to spark some creativity into the team.

Uruguay would welcome such defensive solidity. After six games unbeaten they came badly unstuck when the fixture list put them against Argentina twice and away to Brazil and Bolivia, at the extreme altitude of La Paz. They lost all four, three of them heavily. Coach Oscar Tabarez wanted so much to end his marathon spell with the next World Cup, the tournament where he could field both his veteran strikers and the promising midfielders. But finding a balance proved very difficult, with the team consistently worse on the pitch than it looks on paper. Paraguay changed their coach – Guillermo Barros Schelotto replacing Eduardo Berizzo – after a heavy 4-0 defeat in La Paz. And going down 3-0 to Bolivia also brought the curtain down on a spell of almost 16 years for Tabarez, during which Uruguay had returned to football's top table. But, with easier games to come in the run in, Uruguay's hopes of making it to Qatar are still intact.

Those victories also leave Bolivia close to the qualification positions, but they must start to pick up some away points. Their trip to bottom-of-the-table Venezuela in January is vital. Seldom has a game between these teams had such relevance to the qualification campaign.

Momentum... Peru are now in the play-off places

Sacked...Uruguay fired coach Oscar Tabarez

Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Al Hilal make Asian Champions League history

Saudi Arabian side beat Pohang Steelers to clinch their fourth title

History was always going to be made in the AFC Champions League final on November 23 as Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia and South Korea's Pohang Steelers met in Riyadh. These were the only two teams that had won three Asian titles and one of them was going to make it four. As most expected, that team was Al Hilal, who won 2-0 to send 50,000 or so fans at the King Fahd International Stadium not only happy but also free from stress after a comfortable victory.

With the final taking place on home turf and Pohang's poor domestic form going into the final (the team had lost seven of their previous nine league games), Hilal were always favourites. The 17-time Saudi champions, who had won the Champions League in 2019 and lost the final in 2014 and 2017, also boast what are probably the best foreign

Champions... Al Hilal players celebrate with their trophy

Heroic...Nasser Al Dawsari opened the scoring with a thunderbolt

Competing... Pohang's Sin Jin-Ho jumps for the ball

players in Asia: Malian marksman Moussa Marega, who arrived from Porto in May, joined Bafetimbi Gomis – formerly of France, Lyon, Swansea City and Galatasaray – in attack. When coach Leonardo Jardim, who led Monaco to the 2017 French title, beat a number of European clubs to the signature of Brazilian playmaker Matheus Pereira in August, Hilal moved to the next level.

Yet the headlines belonged elsewhere: to a 22-year-old stand-in left-back. Nasser Al Dawsari was in the team to replace Yasser Al Shahrani, who has been struggling for fitness. After just 16 seconds, he scored the fastest goal ever recorded in the AFC Champions League final – and one of the best. The roars that greeted kick-off were still ringing around the stadium as the youngster picked up the ball just inside the Pohang half. He advanced and then unleashed a thunderbolt of a shot that flew into the top corner past a stunned Lee Jun in the Pohang goal.

Pohang boss Kim Gi-Dong, who had won the 2009 title with the club as a player, said after the game that conceding so early meant that 50 per cent of his game plan had to be scrapped: a solid start and a clean sheet at the break which would frustrate home fans and players. He also said that had Sin Jin-Ho's dipping half-volley from the edge of the area gone in instead of hitting the bar then it would have been an interesting game. But bounce back into play it did and it turned out to be the closest that the Koreans were going to come.

The final soon settled down but Al Hilal were always on top and extended their lead just after the hour. Gomis slipped a perfect ball through to Marega in the area and the striker slotted home. Pohang were never coming back from that and it was all a bit of an anti-climax from their point of view.

In truth however, with stars such as Song Min-Kyu sold to Jeonbuk Motors in the summer and Lee Seung-Mo unable to leave the country due to unfinished military service commitments, Pohang had done well just to get to the final, which is the first time that teams from the eastern and western zones of the tournament actually meet on the pitch.

Al Hilal have helped redress the continental imbalance. Since 2005, eastern clubs have won 13 championships, with the west coming back in 2011 with Al Sadd of Qatar and Hilal eight years later.

There is no reason why Al Hilal can't go on and become the first back-to-back winners since Saudi rival Al Ittihad won the 2004 and 2005 titles. Had the team not been forced to withdraw from the 2020 tournament after an outbreak of COVID-19 then this win could have been the third in a row. With a host of Saudi Arabian internationals – winger Salem Al Dawsari was deservedly named the tournament MVP, while captain Salman Al Faraj is one of the most cultured players on the continent – few would argue that the club are currently number one and deserved that final win.

It ended a great year for football in the country. Under coach Herve Renard, Saudi Arabia are the most improved national team in Asia and despite being placed in a tough group in the final round of qualification, have collected 16 points from the first six games. At the moment, the Green Falcons sit four points clear of Japan in second and five above Australia in third. As the top two teams go through to the World Cup automatically, the Saudis, with four games remaining, are in a great position to make a sixth appearance on the global stage. Looking forward to 2022, few would bet against Saudi Arabia making it number six and Al Hilal lifting Asian title number five.

The 17-time Saudi champions, who had won the Champions League in 2019 and lost the final in 2014 and 2017, also boast what are probably the best foreign players in Asia

Decisive...Moussa Marega seals the trophy with a right-footed finish

MVP...Al Hilal's Salem Al Dawsari

Copa Sudamericana

TIM VICKERY

Athletico Paranaense win Copa again

Second Copa Sudamericana in three years for the Curitiba-based club

Experience won the day as Athletico Paranaense beat fellow Brazilians Red Bull Bragantino 1-0 in Uruguay to claim the Copa Sudamericana, the continent's Europa League equivalent.

Bragantino, from upstate Sao Paulo, have come a long way since the tie-in with the global energy drinks company in 2019. They won promotion to Brazil's first division where, in their second season, they have been performing far better than Athletico. Their focus on solid and rational management is shown by the fact that young Mauricio Barbieri is the longest-serving coach in the league. Unusually in Brazil, his team fields quick centre-backs in a high defensive line and seek to take the game to the opposition.

From the southern city of Curitiba, Athletico Paranaense are not part of Brazil's traditional elite. But, a well-run club, they have been emerging as a force over the last 25 years. They won this competition in 2018, and added the domestic cup the following year (they also reached this year's final). The current side, then, have acquired considerable knockout knowhow – and this proved decisive in the late spring sunshine of Montevideo's Centenario stadium.

In a bid to get outside Athletico's 3-4-3 system, Bragantino went with an attacking line-up. Their opponents were unfazed; Alberto Valentim, the club's former right-back, only took over as coach in October, and has shrewdly left untouched the deep defence and counter-attack model. The game plan was all about biding their time and waiting for the moment when space

Champions... captain Thiago Heleno raises the trophy

Match winner...Nikao celebrates his goal

Leader...Athletico's veteran centre-back Thiago Heleno

would open up for the wingers, Nikao and David Terans. Just before the half-hour, both combined for the key moment of the match.

From deep on the right, centre-back Pedro Henrique hit a long diagonal ball that the Bragantino defence failed to cut out. Terans seized the chance, latching on to the ball and blasting a cross-shot that was pushed out by Cleiton in the Bragantino goal. Nikao reacted quickest, getting in front of the defender to launch an acrobatic scissor-kick volley off his stronger left foot which went back across and inside the post. It was a great moment for Terans, a Uruguayan playing on the pitch where he made his name, and an even better one for Nikao, a club stalwart.

> **Nikao reacted quickest, getting in front of the defender to launch an acrobatic scissor-kick volley off his stronger left foot which went back across and inside the post**

A goal ahead – and an outstanding one – Athletico knew the rest of the script by heart. In the domestic cup they had recently eliminated the all-powerful Flamengo with a counter-attacking masterclass and a 3-0 win in Rio's Maracana stadium. They were confident of being able to hold whatever Bragantino could throw at them. Athletico could now be even happier to defend deep, allowing captain Thiago Heleno, in the middle of the back three, to operate in reduced space, heading and kicking the ball away.

Barbieri abandoned his 4-4-2 at half-time in favour of the more customary 4-3-3, but still the team could not find its rhythm on the big occasion. The more Bragantino strained to get back into the game, the more Athletico interrupted the flow of a stop-start second half. Artur, Bragantino's most potent attacking weapon, was never able to get into the action. There were a couple of minor alarms from corners, but Athletico keeper Santos had a comfortable afternoon, with not a serious save to make before the celebrations could begin.

The problem was that there were so few fans in the Centenario stadium to do the celebrating. The grand old bowl was not even close to being a third full. Athletico had more supporters present than Bragantino, but neither of these clubs have giant followings. The big question here was the validity of staging a one-off final in a neutral venue, happening for the third year.

This 2021 version brought special complications. South America's air connections are inadequate and over-priced during normal times, and the pandemic has made this even worse. With borders only just re-opening, travel is especially precarious. And very unwisely, CONMEBOL only added to the problem with absurd ticket prices. The cheapest seat in the house was $100 – a fortune by South American standards, and well beyond the means of the average fan.

The idea of the final in a neutral venue has pros and cons. There are – or should be – clear marketing advantages from staging a one-off game. But any sense of occasion is fatally undercut by the existence of so many empty spaces in the stands. Some kind of rethink should surely take place before the final of the 2022 Copa Sudamericana.

Frustrated... Bragantino forward Artur

DECEMBER 26, 2021-JANUARY 21, 2022

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

(All kick-off times, if stated, are BST)

Sunday December 26

ENGLAND: In the Premier League, the traditional Boxing Day fixtures begin with Liverpool v Leeds.
BELGIUM: Cercle Brugge take on arch-rivals Club Brugge.

Monday December 27

ENGLAND: Newcastle United host Manchester United in the evening.

Tuesday December 28

ENGLAND: The Premier League's hectic schedule continues with six more fixtures, including Arsenal v Wolves and Leicester v Liverpool.

Wednesday December 29

ENGLAND: Chelsea face Brighton and Brentford host Manchester City.
SCOTLAND: In the Premiership, Rangers travel to Aberdeen and Celtic host Hibernian.

Thursday December 30

ENGLAND: Rafa Benitez faces his old team as Everton take on Newcastle, before Manchester United host Burnley in the final Premier League game of 2021.
PORTUGAL: Porto play Benfica at the top of the Primeira Liga.

Saturday January 1

ENGLAND: Arsenal against champions Manchester City is the standout clash among the Premier League's New Year's Day fixtures.

Sunday January 2

ENGLAND: In a crucial clash at the top of the Premier League table, Chelsea host Liverpool.
SCOTLAND: Celtic host Rangers in Giovanni van Bronckhorst's first Old Firm derby as Gers manager.
SPAIN: La Liga's Madrid-based teams are all in action against each other, with Rayo Vallecano visiting Atletico and Getafe hosting Real.

Monday January 3

SCOTLAND: It's the Edinburgh derby between Hibs and Hearts.

Tuesday January 4

CHINA: The 2021 CSL season concludes, with the top-of-the-table clash between Shanghai Port and Guangzhou FC among the fixtures.

Thursday January 6

ITALY: A full set of midweek Serie A fixtures takes place, including Milan v Roma and Juventus v Napoli.

Friday January 7

GERMANY: The Bundesliga returns from its winter break with champions Bayern Munich v Borussia Monchengladbach.
FRANCE: The first Ligue 1 game of 2022 takes place, with the fixture still unconfirmed kicking off at 8pm.

Saturday January 8

ENGLAND: A weekend of FA Cup third round action begins, with non-league Chesterfield travelling to Chelsea, League One Swindon hosting Manchester City, and Aston Villa visiting Manchester United.

Sunday January 9

CAMEROON: The Africa Cup of Nations begins with hosts Cameroon facing Burkina Faso, followed by Ethiopia v Cape Verde.

Monday January 10

CAMEROON: AFCON 2021 continues with Morocco v Ghana the headline fixture of the day. The Comoros also make their tournament bow against Gabon.

Tuesday January 11

CAMEROON: Mohamed Salah's AFCON campaign begins with Egypt v Nigeria, while holders Algeria face Sierra Leone.
SAUDI ARABIA: The King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah plays host to the Spanish Super Cup, with Barcelona facing Real Madrid in the first semi-final.
ITALY: At the San Siro, giants Inter and Juventus face-off in the Italian Super Cup. Elsewhere, the Italian Cup last 16 takes place.

Wednesday January 12

CAMEROON: Tom Saintfiet's Gambia side play their first-ever Africa Cup of Nations finals game, against Mauritania, while Tunisia take on Mali and Equatorial Guinea meet Ivory Coast.

Super Cup holders...Athletic Bilbao won last season's trophy

SAUDI ARABIA: The second Spanish Super Cup semi-final takes place between Atletico Madrid and Athletic Bilbao.

Thursday January 13

CAMEROON: The hosts' campaign continues against Ethiopia, while Cape Verde take on Burkina Faso.

Friday January 14

CAMEROON: Liverpool team-mates Sadio Mane and Naby Keita go head-to-head as Senegal face Guinea, while Gabon take on Ghana and Morocco play Comoros.
ENGLAND: Rivals Brighton & Hove Albion and Crystal Palace face-off at the Amex Stadium.

Rematch...Algeria edged out Ivory Coast at the last AFCON

Saturday January 15

ENGLAND: Chelsea's difficult start to the New Year continues with a tough trip to Manchester City.
CAMEROON: The pressure will be on Nigeria and Egypt to win, as they face Sudan and Guinea-Bissau respectively in Group D.

Sunday January 16

ENGLAND: It's the Premier League North London derby between Tottenham and Arsenal.
CAMEROON: Algeria's AFCON title defence continues against Equatorial Guinea, while Gambia face West African neighbours Mali.
SAUDI ARABIA: The final of the Spanish Super Cup takes place.

Monday January 17

CAMEROON: The final games of the AFCON group stage begin with Cape Verde v Cameroon and Burkina Faso v Ethiopia in Group A.

Tuesday January 18

CAMEROON: It's Gabon v Morocco and Ghana v Comoros in the final games of Group C, while Group B concludes with Zimbabwe v Guinea and Malawi v Senegal.

Wednesday January 19

GERMANY: The German Cup last 16 pits the two Berlin sides against each other, Hertha and Union.
CAMEROON: Egypt's campaign concludes against Sudan, while Nigeria face Guinea-Bissau.

Thursday January 20

CAMEROON: The last group games take place – Ivory Coast v Algeria and Gambia v Tunisia.
INDIA: The 20th edition of the AFC Women's Asian Cup gets underway, with Japan seeking to defend their title.

Friday January 21

ENGLAND: In the Premier League, Watford host lowly Norwich City.

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1. What is your gender?
- ❑ Male
- ❑ Female
- ❑ I'd prefer not to say
- ❑ Other *(please specify)*

_____

2. What age are you?
- ❑ 14-19
- ❑ 20-29
- ❑ 30-39
- ❑ 40-49
- ❑ 50-59
- ❑ 60-69
- ❑ 70+

3. Where do you reside?
- ❑ United Kingdom
- ❑ Europe
- ❑ North America
- ❑ Central America/Caribbean
- ❑ South America
- ❑ Africa
- ❑ Asia
- ❑ Australia/Oceania

4. What social media channels do you use? *(tick all that apply)*
- ❑ Facebook
- ❑ Twitter
- ❑ Instagram
- ❑ YouTube
- ❑ TikTok
- ❑ Pinterest
- ❑ Reddit
- ❑ None *(I don't use social media)*

5. Do you currently follow *World Soccer* on social media on any of the following channels? *(tick all that apply)*
- ❑ Facebook
- ❑ Twitter
- ❑ Instagram
- ❑ None *(I don't follow World Soccer on social media)*

6. How often do you visit *World Soccer*'s website?
- ❑ Frequently
- ❑ Infrequently
- ❑ Rarely
- ❑ Never

7. What do you visit *World Soccer*'s website for?
- ❑ The latest football news
- ❑ Details of the latest issue
- ❑ Archived articles and features
- ❑ I don't visit *World Soccer*'s website

8. How do you buy *World Soccer*?
- ❑ I'm a subscriber
- ❑ Newsstand
- ❑ Online

9. Where does *World Soccer* rank in the hierarchy of where you like to consume your football content?
- ❑ Very high
- ❑ High
- ❑ Average
- ❑ Low
- ❑ Very low

FROM THE EDITOR

World Soccer has been the unrivalled authority on football around the world since 1960. Under Kelsey Media and my stewardship, we have continued to ensure the magazine remains true to the principles that have made it an institution of football journalism for over 60 years.

Every issue has serious, hard-hitting opinions from the game's most respected writers who offer their expert analysis on football's burning issues. Our global correspondents cast the net far and wide to provide in-depth features and stunning imagery, often approaching big stories through the lens of those close to the scene to give you unprecedented access.

We provide face-to-face interviews with the game's biggest names: players, coaches, untapped talents and influential figures behind the scenes.

We shine the spotlight on the talented youngsters tipped for the top, highlighting tomorrow's stars today; something the magazine has always had a rich history and tradition of doing.

And how can we forget the essential previews of the World Cup and European Championship, special issues that have helped build *World Soccer*'s reputation as the "bible" of the global game.

Now, we don't want to change any of this, but what we do want is to gather your thoughts and opinions – on how you think *World Soccer* is currently doing, and to help shape the brand going forward; in both print and online.

We value your support and opinion, and we want to ensure that we get things right. You can complete this survey online or fill in this form and return it by post.

Thank you for taking the time to be part of shaping *World Soccer*'s future, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Stephen Fishlock, Group Editor

It's quicker and easier to complete online at ***worldsoccer.com/survey***

10. What other titles/publications *(magazines, digital or websites)* do you read for your football content?
(tick all that apply)

- ❑ Daily newspapers
- ❑ *The Athletic*
- ❑ Sky Sports
- ❑ BBC Football
- ❑ *FourFourTwo* magazine
- ❑ Football podcasts
- ❑ Other *(please specify)*

11. What are your three favourite sections of the magazine?

12. What is your least favourite section of the magazine?

13. Who are your three favourite writers/columnists?

14. What would you like to see more of?

15. What would you like to see less of?

16. What is your opinion of the Results, Tables & Fixtures section at the back of the magazine?

- ❑ I love it. Having a comprehensive round-up of international results/line-ups, final domestic league tables, and continental club competition results helps wrap everything up nicely
- ❑ I'd prefer it to include international football results/line-ups only
- ❑ I'd prefer it to include final domestic league tables only
- ❑ I'd prefer it to include continental club competition results only *(i.e. UEFA, CAF, AFC Champions Leagues, Copa Libertadores, etc.)*
- ❑ It's OK, but I'd prefer to allocate the pages towards extra features and articles in the magazine instead
- ❑ It's a total waste of paper – results, tables and fixtures are all available online now

17. Do you gamble on football?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

18. Would you like more women's football content, such as regular female footballer interviews?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

19. Would you like to have more English Premier League content included?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

20. Would you like to see regular retro kit features?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

21. What is your favourite regular annual edition of *World Soccer*?

- ❑ Domestic European season preview
- ❑ Domestic European season review
- ❑ UEFA Champions League preview
- ❑ Review of MLS, South American and Asian leagues
- ❑ The 500 most important players in the world
- ❑ *World Soccer*'s awards of the year special

22. Do you currently subscribe to *World Soccer*'s newsletter?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

23. How regularly would you like to receive *World Soccer*'s newsletter?

- ❑ Every week
- ❑ Every other week
- ❑ Once a month *(to coincide with the on-sale date of the magazine)*

24. Would you listen to a *World Soccer* podcast?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

25. Do you have any finals comments?

PLEASE USE OUR FREEPOST ADDRESS TO SEND YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY TO:
Freepost KELSEY MEDIA
(NO STAMP REQUIRED, AND ENSURE KELSEY MEDIA IS IN CAPITALS)

Thanks for completing our survey. Please provide your details for entry into our prize draw to **win a £50 Amazon voucher.** Ensure your entry is submitted before **January 31, 2022**. The winner will be drawn at random.
The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered in to.

Please tick below if you're happy for us to stay in touch with you:

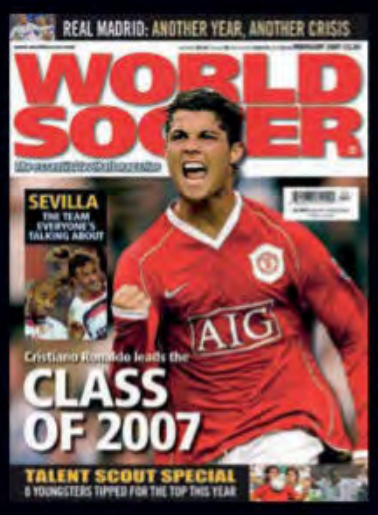
- ❑ **YES** I'd like to receive the e-newsletter from *World Soccer*
- ❑ **YES** I am happy for *Kelsey Media* to contact me by email

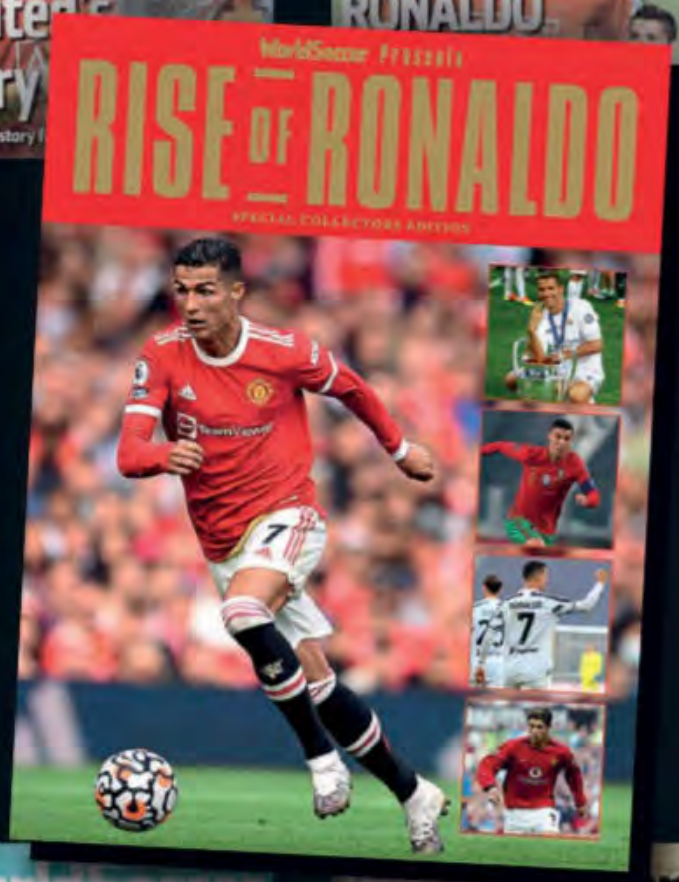
Name:
Email:
Phone number:
Address:

Full Kelsey Media competition terms of entry can be viewed here: www.kelsey.co.uk/competition-terms-conditions. We take data protection seriously. Kelsey Media's privacy policy can be viewed here: www.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-notice

WorldSoccer Presents

RISE OF RONALDO





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GERMANY: BUNDESLIGA 2021-22

ARMINIA BIELEFELD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Stefan **ORTEGA**	(29) 06.11.92
13	Stefanos **KAPINO** (Gre)	(27) 18.03.94
35	Arne **SCHULZ**	(18) 23.03.03

DEFENDERS

2	Amos **PIEPER**	(23) 17.01.98
3	Guilherme **RAMOS** (Por)	(24) 11.08.97
4	Joakim **NILSSON** (Swe)	(27) 06.02.94
5	Jacob **LAURSEN** (Den)	(27) 17.11.94
6	Lennart **CZYBORRA**	(22) 03.05.99
15	Nathan **DE MEDINA** (Bel)	(24) 08.10.97
27	Cedric **BRUNNER** (Sui)	(27) 17.02.94
30	Andres **ANDRADE** (Pan)	(23) 16.10.98

MIDFIELDERS

8	Alessandro **SCHOPF** (Aut)	(27) 07.02.94
11	Masaya **OKUGAWA** (Jap)	(25) 14.04.96
16	Fabian **KUNZE**	(23) 14.06.98
19	Manuel **PRIETL** (Aut)	(30) 03.08.91
20	Patrick **WIMMER** (Aut)	(20) 30.05.01
22	Edimilson **FERNANDES** (Sui)	(25) 15.04.96
37	Vladislav **CHERNY** (Rus)	(18) 21.06.03
39	Sebastian **VASILIADIS** (Gre)	(24) 04.10.97

FORWARDS

9	Fabian **KLOS**	(34) 02.12.87
10	Bryan **LASME** (Fra)	(23) 14.11.98
18	Florian **KRUGER**	(22) 13.02.99
21	Robin **HACK**	(23) 27.08.98
23	Janni-Luca **SERRA**	(23) 13.03.98

COACH

	Frank **KRAMER**	(49) 03.05.72

AUGSBURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Rafal **GIKIEWICZ** (Pol)	(34) 26.10.87
25	Daniel **KLEIN**	(20) 13.03.01
40	Tomas **KOUBEK** (Cze)	(29) 26.08.92

DEFENDERS

2	Robert **GUMNY** (Pol)	(23) 04.06.98
3	Mads **PEDERSEN** (Den)	(25) 01.09.96
4	Reece **OXFORD** (Eng)	(23) 16.12.98
6	Jeffrey **GOUWELEEUW** (Ned)	(30) 10.07.91
19	Felix **UDUOKHAI**	(24) 09.09.97
22	**IAGO** (Bra)	(24) 23.03.97
26	Frederik **WINTHER** (Den)	(20) 04.01.01
32	Raphael **FRAMBERGER**	(26) 06.09.95
39	Dominic **SCHMIDT**	(20) 12.03.01

MIDFIELDERS

5	Tobias **STROBL**	(31) 12.05.90
8	Carlos **GRUEZO** (Ecu)	(26) 19.04.95
10	Arne **MAIER**	(22) 08.01.99
14	Jan **MORAVEK** (Cze)	(32) 01.11.89
20	Daniel **CALIGIURI**	(33) 15.01.88
24	Fredrik **JENSEN** (Fin)	(24) 09.09.97
30	Niklas **DORSCH**	(23) 15.01.98
41	Tim **CIVEJA**	(19) 04.01.02

FORWARDS

7	Florian **NIEDERLECHNER**	(31) 24.10.90
9	Sergio **CORDOVA** (Ven)	(24) 09.08.97
11	Michael **GREGORITSCH** (Aut)	(27) 18.04.94
16	Ruben **VARGAS** (Sui)	(23) 05.08.98
17	Noah **SARENREN BAZEE** (Nga)	(25) 21.08.96
21	Andi **ZEQIRI** (Sui)	(22) 22.06.99
27	Alfred **FINNBOGASON** (Isl)	(32) 01.02.89
28	Andre **HAHN**	(31) 13.08.90
29	Lasse **GUNTHER**	(18) 21.03.03

COACH

	Markus **WEINZIERL**	(46) 28.12.74

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lukas **HRADECKY** (Fin)	(32) 24.11.89
36	Niklas **LOMB**	(28) 28.07.93
40	Andrey **LUNEV** (Rus)	(30) 13.11.91
41	Maximilian **NEUTGENS**	(17) 03.03.04

DEFENDERS

3	Panagiotis **RETSOS** (Gre)	(23) 09.08.98
4	Jonathan **TAH**	(25) 11.02.96
5	Mitchel **BAKKER** (Ned)	(21) 20.06.00
6	Odilon **KOSSOUNOU** (Civ)	(20) 04.01.01
12	Edmond **TAPSOBA** (Bfa)	(22) 02.02.99
22	Daley **SINKGRAVEN** (Ned)	(26) 04.07.95
24	Timothy **FOSU-MENSAH** (Ned)	(23) 02.01.98
30	Jeremie **FRIMPONG** (Ned)	(21) 10.12.00
33	Piero **HINCAPIE** (Ecu)	(19) 09.01.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	Robert **ANDRICH**	(27) 22.09.94
10	Kerem **DEMIRBAY**	(28) 03.07.93
11	Nadiem **AMIRI**	(25) 27.10.96
15	Julian **BAUMGARTLINGER** (Aut)	(33) 02.01.88
20	Charles **ARANGUIZ** (Chi)	(32) 17.04.89
25	Exequiel **PALACIOS** (Arg)	(23) 05.10.98
27	Florian **WIRTZ**	(18) 03.05.03
29	Zidan **SERTDEMIR** (Den)	(16) 04.02.05
31	Amine **ADLI** (Fra)	(21) 10.05.00
39	Sadik **FOFANA** (Tog)	(18) 16.05.03

FORWARDS

7	**PAULINHO** (Bra)	(21) 15.07.00
13	Lucas **ALARIO** (Arg)	(29) 08.10.92
14	Patrik **SCHICK** (Cze)	(25) 24.01.96
19	Moussa **DIABY** (Fra)	(22) 07.07.99
28	Iker **BRAVO** (Spa)	(16) 13.01.05
37	Emrehan **GEDIKLI**	(18) 25.04.03
38	Karim **BELLARABI**	(31) 08.04.90

COACH

	Gerardo **SEOANE** (Sui)	(43) 30.10.78

BAYERN MUNICH

GOALKEEPERS

1	Manuel **NEUER**	(35) 27.03.86
26	Sven **ULREICH**	(33) 03.08.88
36	Christian **FRUCHTL**	(21) 28.01.00

DEFENDERS

2	Dayot **UPAMECANO** (Fra)	(23) 27.10.98
3	Omar **RICHARDS** (Eng)	(23) 15.02.98
4	Niklas **SULE**	(26) 03.09.95
5	Benjamin **PAVARD** (Fra)	(25) 28.03.96
19	Alphonso **DAVIES** (Can)	(21) 02.11.00
20	Bouna **SARR** (Sen)	(29) 31.01.92
21	Lucas **HERNANDEZ** (Fra)	(25) 14.02.96
23	Tanguy **NIANZOU** (Fra)	(19) 07.06.02
44	Josip **STANISIC** (Cro)	(21) 02.04.00

MIDFIELDERS

6	Joshua **KIMMICH**	(26) 08.02.95
8	Leon **GORETZKA**	(26) 06.02.95
17	Mickael **CUISANCE** (Fra)	(22) 16.08.99
18	Marcel **SABITZER** (Aut)	(27) 17.03.94
22	Marc **ROCA** (Spa)	(25) 26.11.96
24	Corentin **TOLISSO** (Fra)	(27) 03.08.94
37	Taylor **BOOTH** (USA)	(20) 31.05.01
40	Malik **TILLMAN**	(19) 28.05.02
42	Jamal **MUSIALA**	(18) 26.02.03

FORWARDS

7	Serge **GNABRY**	(26) 14.07.95
9	Robert **LEWANDOWSKI** (Pol)	(33) 21.08.88
10	Leroy **SANE**	(25) 11.01.96
11	Kingsley **COMAN** (Fra)	(25) 13.06.96
13	Eric Maxim **CHOUPO-MOTING** (Cmr)	(32) 23.03.89
25	Thomas **MULLER**	(32) 13.09.89

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	Julian **NAGELSMANN**	(34) 23.07.87

New boy...Bayern Munich summer signing Omar Richards

BOCHUM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Manuel **RIEMANN**	(33) 09.09.88
21	Michael **ESSER**	(34) 22.11.87
34	Paul **GRAVE**	(20) 10.04.01

DEFENDERS

2	Cristian **GAMBOA** (Crc)	(32) 24.10.89
3	Danilo **SOARES** (Bra)	(30) 29.10.91
4	Erhan **MASOVIC** (Srb)	(23) 22.11.98
5	Saulo **DECARLI** (Sui)	(29) 04.02.92
11	Herbert **BOCKHORN** (Uga)	(26) 31.01.95
16	Kostas **STAFYLIDIS** (Gre)	(28) 02.12.93
24	Vassilios **LAMPROPOULOS** (Gre)	(31) 31.03.90
29	Maxim **LEITSCH**	(23) 18.05.98
37	Armel **BELLA-KOTCHAP**	(20) 11.12.01

MIDFIELDERS

6	Patrick **OSTERHAGE**	(21) 01.02.00
7	Danny **BLUM**	(30) 07.01.91
8	Anthony **LOSILLA** (Fra)	(35) 10.03.86
13	Raman **CHIBSAH** (Gha)	(28) 10.03.93
14	Tom **WEILANDT**	(29) 27.04.92
17	Gerrit **HOLTMANN**	(26) 25.03.95
20	Elvis **REXHBECAJ** (Kvx)	(24) 01.11.97
22	Christopher **ANTWI-ADJEI** (Gha)	(27) 07.02.94
23	Robert **TESCHE**	(34) 27.05.87
38	Eduard **LOWEN**	(24) 28.01.97

FORWARDS

9	Simon **ZOLLER**	(30) 26.06.91
10	Takuma **ASANO** (Jap)	(27) 10.11.94
15	Soma **NOVOTHNY** (Hun)	(27) 16.06.94
19	Tarsis **BONGA**	(24) 10.01.97
27	Milos **PANTOVIC** (Srb)	(25) 07.07.96
28	Luis **HARTWIG**	(19) 23.11.02
35	Silvere **GANVOULA** (Cgo)	(25) 22.06.96
40	Sebastian **POLTER**	(30) 01.04.91

COACH

	Thomas **REIS**	(48) 04.10.73

BOR. DORTMUND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gregor **KOBEL** (Sui)	(24) 06.12.97
25	Luca **UNBEHAUN**	(20) 27.02.01
31	Silas **OSTRZINSKI**	(18) 19.11.03
35	Marwin **HITZ** (Sui)	(34) 18.09.87
38	Roman **BURKI** (Sui)	(31) 14.11.90
40	Stefan **DRLJACA**	(22) 20.04.99

DEFENDERS

2	Mateu **MOREY** (Spa)	(21) 02.03.00
4	Soumaila **COULIBALY** (Fra)	(18) 14.10.03
5	Dan-Axel **ZAGADOU** (Fra)	(22) 03.06.99
13	Raphael **GUERREIRO** (Por)	(28) 22.12.93
14	Nico **SCHULZ**	(28) 01.04.93
15	Mats **HUMMELS**	(33) 16.12.88
16	Manuel **AKANJI** (Sui)	(26) 19.07.95
24	Thomas **MEUNIER** (Bel)	(30) 12.09.91
29	Marcel **SCHMELZER**	(33) 22.01.88
30	Felix **PASSLACK**	(23) 29.05.98
34	Marin **PONGRACIC** (Cro)	(24) 11.09.97
45	Lennard **MALONEY** (USA)	(22) 08.10.99

MIDFIELDERS

7	Gio **REYNA** (USA)	(19) 13.11.02
8	Mahmoud **DAHOUD**	(25) 01.01.96
10	Thorgan **HAZARD** (Bel)	(28) 29.03.93
19	Julian **BRANDT**	(25) 02.05.96
20	**REINIER** (Bra)	(19) 19.01.02
22	Jude **BELLINGHAM** (Eng)	(18) 29.06.03
23	Emre **CAN**	(27) 12.01.94
28	Axel **WITSEL** (Bel)	(32) 12.01.89
32	Abdoulaye **KAMARA** (Gui)	(17) 06.11.04
37	Tobias **RASCHL**	(21) 21.02.00
39	Marius **WOLF**	(26) 27.05.95
42	Goktan **GURPUZ**	(18) 22.01.03
44	Immanuel **PHERAI** (Ned)	(20) 25.04.01
46	Marco **PASALIC** (Cro)	(21) 14.09.00
47	Antonios **PAPADOPOULOS**	(22) 10.09.99

FORWARDS

9	Erling **HAALAND** (Nor)	(21) 21.07.00
11	Marco **REUS**	(32) 31.05.89
18	Youssoufa **MOUKOKO**	(17) 20.11.04
21	Donyell **MALEN** (Ned)	(22) 19.01.99
27	Steffen **TIGGES**	(23) 31.07.98
36	Ansgar **KNAUFF**	(19) 10.01.02

COACH

	Marco **ROSE**	(45) 11.09.76

BOR. M'GLADBACH

GOALKEEPERS

1	Yann **SOMMER** (Sui)	(33) 17.12.88
21	Tobias **SIPPEL**	(33) 22.03.88
41	Jan **OLSCHOWSKY**	(20) 18.11.01

DEFENDERS

4	Mamadou **DOUCOURE** (Fra)	(23) 21.05.98
15	Jordan **BEYER**	(21) 19.05.00
18	Stefan **LAINER** (Aut)	(29) 27.08.92
20	Luca **NETZ**	(18) 15.05.03
24	Tony **JANTSCHKE**	(31) 07.04.90
25	Ramy **BENSEBAINI** (Alg)	(26) 16.04.95
28	Matthias **GINTER**	(27) 19.01.94
29	Joe **SCALLY** (USA)	(18) 31.12.02
30	Nico **ELVEDI** (Sui)	(25) 30.09.96
33	Kaan **KURT** (Tur)	(20) 21.12.01

MIDFIELDERS

6	Christoph **KRAMER**	(30) 19.02.91
7	Patrick **HERRMANN**	(30) 12.02.91
8	Denis **ZAKARIA** (Sui)	(25) 20.11.96
17	Kouadio **KONE** (Fra)	(20) 17.05.01
22	Laszlo **BENES** (Svk)	(24) 09.09.97
23	Jonas **HOFMANN**	(29) 14.07.92
26	Torben **MUSEL**	(22) 25.07.99
32	Florian **NEUHAUS**	(24) 16.03.97
34	Conor **NOSS** (Irl)	(20) 01.01.01

FORWARDS

10	Marcus **THURAM** (Fra)	(24) 06.08.97
11	Hannes **WOLF** (Aut)	(22) 16.04.99
13	Lars **STINDL**	(33) 26.08.88
14	Alassane **PLEA** (Fra)	(28) 10.03.93
36	Breel **EMBOLO** (Sui)	(24) 14.02.97
37	Keanan **BENNETTS** (Eng)	(22) 09.03.99
39	Mika **SCHROERS**	(19) 04.02.02

COACH

	Adi **HUTTER** (Aut)	(51) 11.02.70

COLOGNE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Timo **HORN**	(28) 12.05.93
20	Marvin **SCHWABE**	(26) 25.04.95
40	Jonas **URBIG**	(18) 08.08.03
44	Matthias **KOBBING**	(24) 28.05.97

DEFENDERS

2	Benno **SCHMITZ**	(27) 17.11.94
3	Noah **KATTERBACH**	(20) 13.04.01
4	Timo **HUBERS**	(25) 20.07.96
5	Rafael **CZICHOS**	(31) 14.05.90
15	Luca **KILIAN**	(22) 01.09.99
19	Kingsley **EHIZIBUE** (Nga)	(26) 25.05.95
22	Jorge **MERE** (Spa)	(24) 17.04.97
23	Jannes **HORN**	(24) 06.02.97
26	Sava **CESTIC** (Srb)	(20) 19.02.01

MIDFIELDERS

6	Salih **OZCAN**	(23) 11.01.98
7	Dejan **LJUBICIC** (Aut)	(24) 08.10.97
11	Florian **KAINZ** (Aut)	(29) 24.10.92
14	Jonas **HECTOR**	(31) 27.05.90
17	Kingsley **SCHINDLER**	(28) 12.07.93
18	Ondrej **DUDA** (Svk)	(27) 05.12.94
21	Louis **SCHAUB** (Aut)	(26) 29.12.94
28	Ellyes **SKHIRI** (Tun)	(26) 10.05.95
31	Tomas **OSTRAK** (Cze)	(21) 05.02.00
36	Niklas **HAUPTMANN**	(25) 27.06.96

FORWARDS

9	Sebastian **ANDERSSON** (Swe)	(30) 15.07.91
13	Mark **UTH**	(30) 24.08.91
25	Tim **LEMPERLE**	(19) 05.02.02
27	Anthony **MODESTE** (Fra)	(33) 14.04.88
29	Jan **THIELMANN**	(19) 26.05.02
30	Marvin **OBUZ**	(19) 25.01.02

COACH

	Steffen **BAUMGART**	(49) 05.01.72

E. FRANKFURT

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kevin **TRAPP**	(31) 08.07.90
31	Jens **GRAHL**	(33) 22.09.88
40	Diant **RAMAJ**	(20) 19.09.01
47	Jannik **HORZ**	(18) 14.04.03

DEFENDERS

2	Evan **N'DICKA** (Fra)	(22) 20.08.99
13	Martin **HINTEREGGER** (Aut)	(29) 07.09.92
18	Almamy **TOURE** (Fra)	(25) 28.04.96
22	Timothy **CHANDLER** (USA)	(31) 29.03.90
24	Danny **DA COSTA**	(28) 13.07.93
25	Christopher **LENZ**	(27) 22.09.94
35	**TUTA** (Bra)	(22) 04.07.99
37	Erik **DURM**	(29) 12.05.92
47	Jan **SCHRODER**	(18) 15.04.03

MIDFIELDERS

3	Stefan **ILSANKER** (Aut)	(32) 18.05.89
6	Kristijan **JAKIC** (Cro)	(24) 14.05.97
7	Ajdin **HRUSTIC** (Aus)	(25) 05.07.96
8	Djibril **SOW** (Sui)	(24) 06.02.97
10	Filip **KOSTIC** (Srb)	(29) 01.11.92
15	Daichi **KAMADA** (Jap)	(25) 05.08.96
17	Sebastian **RODE**	(31) 11.10.90
20	Makoto **HASEBE** (Jap)	(37) 18.01.84
27	Aymane **BARKOK** (Mar)	(23) 21.05.98
28	Fabio **BLANCO** (Spa)	(17) 18.02.04
29	Jesper **LINDSTROM** (Den)	(21) 29.02.00
32	Amin **YOUNES**	(28) 06.08.93

FORWARDS

9	Sam **LAMMERS** (Ned)	(24) 30.04.97
19	Rafael **SANTOS BORRE** (Col)	(26) 15.09.95
21	Ragnar **ACHE**	(23) 28.07.98
23	Jens Petter **HAUGE** (Nor)	(22) 12.10.99
38	Juan **HERRERO** (Spa)	(16) 28.01.05
39	Goncalo **PACIENCIA** (Por)	(27) 01.08.94
45	Martin **PECAR** (Svn)	(19) 05.07.02
48	Gianluca **SCHAFER**	(18) 27.02.03

COACH

	Oliver **GLASNER** (Aut)	(47) 28.08.74

FREIBURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Benjamin **UPHOFF**	(28) 08.08.93
21	Noah **ATUBOLU**	(19) 25.05.02
26	Mark **FLEKKEN** (Ned)	(28) 13.06.93

DEFENDERS

3	Philipp **LIENHART** (Aut)	(25) 11.07.96
4	Nico **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(22) 01.12.99
5	Manuel **GULDE**	(30) 12.02.91
17	Lukas **KUBLER**	(29) 30.08.92
23	Dominique **HEINTZ**	(28) 15.08.93
24	Kimberly **EZEKWEM**	(20) 19.06.01
25	Kiliann **SILDILLIA** (Fra)	(19) 16.05.02
30	Christian **GUNTER**	(28) 28.02.93
31	Keven **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(24) 28.04.97

MIDFIELDERS

7	Jonathan **SCHMID** (Fra)	(31) 26.06.90
8	Maximilian **EGGESTEIN**	(25) 08.12.96
14	Yannik **KEITEL**	(21) 15.02.00
19	Janik **HABERER**	(27) 02.04.94
27	Nicolas **HOFLER**	(31) 09.03.90
32	Vincenzo **GRIFO** (Ita)	(28) 07.04.93

FORWARDS

9	Lucas **HOLER**	(27) 10.07.94
11	Ermedin **DEMIROVIC** (Bih)	(23) 25.03.98
18	Nils **PETERSEN**	(33) 06.12.88
20	Kevin **SCHADE**	(20) 27.11.01
22	Roland **SALLAI** (Hun)	(24) 22.05.97
29	**JEONG** Woo-Yeong (Kor)	(22) 20.09.99
33	Noah **WEISSHAUPT**	(20) 20.09.01
45	Nishan **BURKART** (Sui)	(21) 31.01.00

COACH

Christian **STREICH**	(56) 11.06.65

GREUTHER FURTH

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marius **FUNK**	(25) 01.01.96
25	Leon **SCHAFFRAN**	(23) 31.07.98
30	Sascha **BURCHERT**	(32) 30.10.89

DEFENDERS

2	Simon **ASTA**	(20) 25.01.01
4	Maximilian **BAUER**	(21) 09.02.00
5	Justin **HOOGMA** (Ned)	(23) 11.06.98
15	Jetro **WILLEMS** (Ned)	(27) 30.03.94
18	Marco **MEYERHOFER**	(26) 18.11.95
23	Gideon **JUNG**	(27) 12.09.94
24	Nick **VIERGEVER** (Ned)	(32) 03.08.89
27	Luca **ITTER**	(22) 05.01.99
29	Elias **KRATZER**	(21) 08.01.00
32	Abdourahmane **BARRY** (Fra)	(21) 21.02.00

MIDFIELDERS

6	Adrian **FEIN**	(22) 18.03.99
8	Nils **SEUFERT**	(24) 03.02.97
13	Max **CHRISTIANSEN**	(25) 25.09.96
14	Hans Nunoo **SARPEI** (Gha)	(23) 22.08.98
21	Timothy **TILLMAN**	(22) 04.01.99
22	Sebastian **GRIESBECK**	(31) 03.10.90
28	Jeremy **DUDZIAK** (Tun)	(26) 28.08.95
33	Paul **SEGUIN**	(26) 29.03.95
39	Mert-Yusuf **TORLAK**	(19) 18.07.02
40	Jamie **LEWELING**	(20) 26.02.01

FORWARDS

7	Robin **KEHR**	(21) 22.02.00
9	Emil **BERGGREEN** (Den)	(28) 10.05.93
10	Branimir **HRGOTA** (Swe)	(28) 12.01.93
11	Dickson **ABIAMA** (Nga)	(23) 03.11.98
16	Havard **NIELSEN** (Nor)	(28) 15.07.93
17	Jessic **NGANKAM**	(21) 20.07.00
19	Cedric **ITTEN** (Sui)	(24) 27.12.96
37	Julian **GREEN** (USA)	(26) 06.06.95

COACH

Stefan **LEITL**	(44) 29.08.77

HERTHA BERLIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alexander **SCHWOLOW**	(29) 02.06.92
12	Nils **KORBER**	(25) 13.11.96
22	Rune **JARSTEIN** (Nor)	(37) 29.09.84
32	Oliver **CHRISTENSEN** (Den)	(22) 22.03.99

DEFENDERS

2	Peter **PEKARIK** (Svk)	(35) 30.10.86
4	Dedryck **BOYATA** (Bel)	(31) 28.11.90
5	Niklas **STARK**	(26) 14.04.95
13	Lukas **KLUNTER**	(25) 26.05.96
17	Maximilian **MITTELSTADT**	(24) 18.03.97
21	Marvin **PLATTENHARDT**	(29) 26.01.92
25	Jordan **TORUNARIGHA**	(24) 07.08.97
31	Marton **DARDAI**	(19) 12.02.02
34	Cimo **ROCKER**	(27) 21.01.94
42	Deyovaisio **ZEEFUIK** (Ned)	(23) 11.03.98
44	Linus **GECHTER**	(17) 27.02.04
45	Marlon **MORGENSTERN**	(20) 30.01.01

MIDFIELDERS

6	Vladimir **DARIDA** (Cze)	(31) 08.08.90
8	Suat **SERDAR**	(24) 11.04.97
10	Jurgen **EKKELENKAMP** (Ned)	(21) 05.04.00
18	Santiago **ASCACIBAR** (Arg)	(24) 25.02.97
27	Kevin-Prince **BOATENG** (Gha)	(34) 06.03.87
29	Lucas **TOUSART** (Fra)	(24) 29.04.97
34	Maurice **COVIC**	(23) 17.04.98
40	Jonas **MICHELBRINK**	(20) 23.06.01
41	Jonas **DIRKNER**	(19) 15.07.02

FORWARDS

7	Davie **SELKE**	(26) 20.01.95
9	Krzysztof **PIATEK** (Pol)	(26) 01.07.95
11	Myziane **MAOLIDA** (Fra)	(22) 14.02.99
14	Ishak **BELFODIL** (Alg)	(29) 15.01.92
19	Stevan **JOVETIC** (Mne)	(32) 02.11.89
23	Marco **RICHTER**	(24) 24.11.97
30	Dennis **JASTRZEMBSKI** (Pol)	(21) 20.02.00
36	Ruwen **WERTHMULLER** (Sui)	(20) 28.01.01

COACH

Tayfun **KORKUT** (Tur)	(47) 02.04.74

HOFFENHEIM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Oliver **BAUMANN**	(31) 02.06.90
12	Philipp **PENTKE**	(36) 01.05.85
36	Nahuel **NOLL**	(18) 17.03.03
37	Luca **PHILIPP**	(21) 28.11.00

DEFENDERS

2	Joshua **BRENET** (Ned)	(27) 20.03.94
3	Pavel **KADERABEK** (Cze)	(29) 25.04.92
4	Ermin **BICAKCIC** (Bih)	(31) 24.01.90
15	Kasim **ADAMS** (Gha)	(26) 22.06.95
21	Benjamin **HUBNER**	(32) 04.07.89
22	Kevin **VOGT**	(30) 23.09.91
25	Kevin **AKPOGUMA** (Nga)	(26) 19.04.95
28	Chris **RICHARDS** (USA)	(21) 28.03.00
32	Melayro **BOGARDE** (Ned)	(19) 28.05.02
38	Stefan **POSCH** (Aut)	(24) 14.05.97
43	Noah **KONIG**	(18) 17.05.03
45	Fabian **RUTH**	(20) 02.07.01

MIDFIELDERS

6	Havard **NORDTVEIT** (Nor)	(31) 21.06.90
8	Dennis **GEIGER**	(23) 10.06.98
11	Florian **GRILLITSCH** (Aut)	(26) 07.08.95
13	Angelo **STILLER**	(20) 04.04.01
14	Christoph **BAUMGARTNER** (Aut)	(22) 01.08.99
16	Sebastian **RUDY**	(31) 28.02.90
17	David **RAUM**	(23) 22.04.98
18	Diadie **SAMASSEKOU** (Mli)	(25) 11.01.96
20	Mijat **GACINOVIC** (Srb)	(26) 08.02.95
29	Robert **SKOV** (Den)	(25) 20.05.96
30	Marco **JOHN**	(19) 02.04.02

FORWARDS

7	Jacob **BRUUN LARSEN** (Den)	(23) 19.09.98
9	Ihlas **BEBOU** (Tog)	(27) 23.04.94
10	Munas **DABBUR** (Isr)	(29) 14.05.92
23	Sargis **ADAMYAN** (Arm)	(28) 23.05.93
27	Andrej **KRAMARIC** (Cro)	(30) 19.06.91
33	Georginio **RUTTER** (Fra)	(19) 20.04.02
44	Fisnik **ASLLANI**	(19) 08.08.02

COACH

Sebastian **HOENESS**	(39) 12.05.82

MAINZ

GOALKEEPERS

1	Finn **DAHMEN**	(23) 27.03.98
27	Robin **ZENTNER**	(27) 28.10.94
32	Lasse **RIESS**	(20) 27.07.01
33	Omer **HANIN** (Isr)	(23) 14.05.98
41	Marius **LIESEGANG**	(21) 07.01.00

DEFENDERS

3	Aaron **MARTIN** (Spa)	(24) 22.04.97
4	Jerry **ST JUSTE** (Ned)	(25) 19.10.96
16	Stefan **BELL**	(30) 24.08.91
18	Daniel **BROSINSKI**	(33) 17.07.88
19	Moussa **NIAKHATE** (Fra)	(25) 08.03.96
23	Anderson **LUCOQUI** (Ang)	(24) 06.07.97
30	Silvan **WIDMER** (Sui)	(28) 05.03.93
34	David **NEMETH** (Aut)	(20) 18.03.01
42	Alexander **HACK**	(28) 08.09.93

MIDFIELDERS

5	Jean-Paul **BOETIUS** (Ned)	(27) 22.03.94
6	Anton **STACH**	(23) 15.11.98
7	**LEE** Jae-Sung (Kor)	(29) 10.08.92
8	Leandro **BARREIRO** (Lux)	(21) 03.01.00
22	Kevin **STOGER** (Aut)	(28) 27.08.93
24	Matondo-Merveille **PAPELA**	(20) 18.01.01
25	Niklas **TAUER**	(20) 17.02.01
31	Dominik **KOHR**	(27) 31.01.94
35	Stephan **FURSTNER**	(34) 11.09.87
37	Timothe **RUPIL** (Lux)	(18) 12.06.03
43	Romario **ROSCH**	(22) 01.07.99

FORWARDS

9	Karim **ONISIWO** (Aut)	(29) 17.03.92
11	Marcus **INGVARTSEN** (Den)	(25)04.01.96
26	Paul **NEBEL**	(19) 10.10.02
28	Adam **SZALAI** (Hun)	(34) 09.12.87
29	Jonathan **BURKARDT**	(21) 11.07.00
36	Kaito **MIZUTA** (Jap)	(21) 08.04.00
38	Ben **BOBZIEN**	(18) 29.04.03

COACH

Bo **SVENSSON** (Den)	(42) 04.08.79

RB LEIPZIG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Peter **GULACSI** (Hun)	(31) 06.05.90
13	Philipp **TSCHAUNER**	(36) 03.11.85
29	Fabian **EUTINGER**	(18) 12.10.03
31	Josep **MARTINEZ** (Spa)	(23) 27.05.98

DEFENDERS

2	Mohamed **SIMAKAN** (Fra)	(21) 03.05.00
3	**ANGELINO** (Spa)	(24) 04.01.97
4	Willi **ORBAN** (Hun)	(29) 03.11.92
16	Lukas **KLOSTERMANN**	(25) 03.06.96
22	Nordi **MUKIELE** (Fra)	(24) 01.11.97
23	Marcel **HALSTENBERG**	(30) 27.09.91
32	Josko **GVARDIOL** (Cro)	(19) 23.01.02
35	Solomon **BONNAH** (Ned)	(18) 19.08.03
39	Benjamin **HENRICHS**	(24) 23.02.97
43	Marcelo **SARACCHI** (Uru)	(23) 23.04.98

MIDFIELDERS

8	Amadou **HAIDARA** (Mli)	(23) 31.01.98
10	Emil **FORSBERG** (Swe)	(30) 23.10.91
14	Tyler **ADAMS** (USA)	(22) 14.02.99
17	Dominik **SZOBOSZLAI** (Hun)	(21) 25.10.00
18	Christopher **NKUNKU** (Fra)	(24) 14.11.97
25	Dani **OLMO** (Spa)	(23) 07.05.98
26	Ilaix **MORIBA** (Gui)	(18) 19.01.03
27	Konrad **LAIMER** (Aut)	(24) 27.05.97
37	Sidney **RAEBIGER**	(16) 17.04.05
44	Kevin **KAMPL** (Svn)	(31) 09.10.90
46	Ben **KLEFISCH**	(18) 02.06.03
47	Joscha **WOSZ**	(19) 20.07.02

FORWARDS

9	Yussuf **POULSEN** (Den)	(27) 15.06.94
21	Brian **BROBBEY** (Ned)	(19) 01.02.02
33	Andre **SILVA** (Por)	(26) 06.11.95
38	Hugo **NOVOA** (Spa)	(18) 24.01.03

COACH

Achim **BEIERLORZER** (interim)	(54) 20.11.67

STUTTGART

GOALKEEPERS

1	Florian **MULLER**	(24) 13.11.97
33	Fabian **BREDLOW**	(26) 02.03.95
42	Florian **SCHOCK**	(20) 22.05.01

DEFENDERS

2	Waldemar **ANTON**	(25) 20.07.96
3	Wataru **ENDO** (Jap)	(28) 09.02.93
4	Marc Oliver **KEMPF**	(26) 28.01.95
5	Konstantinos **MAVROPANOS** (Gre)	(24) 11.12.97
15	Pascal **STENZEL**	(25) 20.03.96
24	Borna **SOSA** (Cro)	(23) 21.01.98
37	Hiroki **ITO** (Jap)	(22) 12.05.99
43	Luca **BAZZOLI**	(21) 01.11.00
48	Matej **MAGLICA** (Cro)	(23) 25.09.98

MIDFIELDERS

6	Clinton **MOLA** (Eng)	(20) 15.03.01
7	Tanguy **COULIBALY** (Fra)	(20) 18.02.01
8	Enzo **MILLOT** (Fra)	(19) 17.07.02
10	Daniel **DIDAVI**	(31) 21.02.90
11	Erik **THOMMY**	(27) 20.08.94
16	Atakan **KARAZOR**	(25) 13.10.96
20	Philipp **FORSTER**	(26) 04.02.95
21	Philipp **KLEMENT**	(29) 09.09.92
22	Chris **FUHRICH**	(23) 09.01.98
23	Orel **MANGALA** (Bel)	(23) 18.03.98
25	Lilian **EGLOFF**	(19) 20.08.02
28	Nikolas **NARTEY** (Den)	(21) 22.02.00
30	Roberto **MASSIMO**	(21) 12.10.00
31	Mateo **KLIMOWICZ**	(21) 06.07.00
32	Naouirou **AHAMADA** (Fra)	(19) 29.03.02
34	Omer **BEYAZ** (Tur)	(18) 29.08.03
35	Jordan **MEYER**	(19) 26.03.02
47	Richard **WEIL**	(33) 06.02.88
49	Falko **MICHEL**	(20) 14.01.01

FORWARDS

9	Sasa **KALAJDZIC** (Aut)	(24) 07.07.97
14	Silas Katompa **MVUMPA** (Cod)	(23) 06.10.98
17	Omar **MARMOUSH** (Egy)	(22) 07.02.99
18	Hamadi **AL GHADDIOUI** (Mar)	(31) 22.09.90
19	Wahid **FAGHIR** (Den)	(18) 29.07.03
29	Momo **CISSE** (Gui)	(19) 17.10.02
44	Mohamed **SANKOH** (Ned)	(18) 16.10.03
50	Alexis **TIBIDI** (Fra)	(18) 03.11.03

COACH

Pellegrino **MATARAZZO** (USA)	(44) 28.11.77

UNION BERLIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Andreas **LUTHE**	(34) 10.03.87
12	Jakob **BUSK** (Den)	(28) 12.09.93
19	Frederik **RONNOW** (Den)	(29) 04.08.92
40	Yannic **STEIN**	(17) 17.09.04
42	Niklas **PETZSCH**	(17) 18.06.04

DEFENDERS

3	Paul **JAECKEL**	(23) 22.07.98
4	Rick **VAN DRONGELEN** (Ned)	(23) 20.12.98
5	Marvin **FRIEDRICH**	(26) 13.12.95
6	Julian **RYERSON** (Nor)	(24) 17.11.97
20	Bastian **OCZIPKA**	(32) 12.01.89
23	Niko **GIESSELMANN**	(30) 26.09.91
25	Timo **BAUMGARTL**	(25) 04.03.96
26	Tymoteusz **PUCHACZ** (Pol)	(22) 23.01.99
28	Christopher **TRIMMEL** (Aut)	(34) 24.02.87
31	Robin **KNOCHE**	(29) 22.05.92
37	Mathis **BRUNS**	(17) 31.03.04

MIDFIELDERS

7	Levin **OZTUNALI**	(25) 15.03.96
8	Rani **KHEDIRA**	(27) 27.01.94
15	Pawel **WSZOLEK** (Pol)	(29) 30.04.92
18	Keita **ENDO** (Jap)	(24) 22.11.97
21	Grischa **PROMEL**	(26) 09.01.95
24	Genki **HARAGUCHI** (Jap)	(30) 09.05.91
29	Laurenz **DEHL**	(20) 12.12.01
30	Kevin **MOHWALD**	(28) 03.07.93
35	Fabio **SCHNEIDER**	(19) 31.07.02

FORWARDS

9	Andreas **VOGLSAMMER**	(29) 09.01.92
10	Max **KRUSE**	(33) 19.03.88
11	Anthony **UJAH** (Nga)	(31) 14.10.90
14	Taiwo **AWONIYI** (Nga)	(24) 12.08.97
17	Kevin **BEHRENS**	(30) 03.02.91
27	Sheraldo **BECKER** (Sur)	(26) 09.02.95
36	Cedric **TEUCHERT**	(24) 14.01.97
39	Suleiman **ABDULLAHI** (Nga)	(25) 10.12.96

COACH

Urs **FISCHER** (Sui)	(55) 20.02.66

WOLFSBURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Koen **CASTEELS** (Bel)	(29) 25.06.92
12	Pavao **PERVAN** (Aut)	(34) 13.11.87
30	Niklas **KLINGER**	(26) 13.10.95
35	Philipp **SCHULZE**	(18) 29.01.03

DEFENDERS

2	**WILLIAM** (Bra)	(26) 03.04.95
3	Sebastiaan **BORNAUW** (Bel)	(22) 22.03.99
4	Maxence **LACROIX** (Fra)	(21) 06.04.00
5	Micky **VAN DE VEN** (Ned)	(20) 19.04.01
6	**PAULO OTAVIO** (Bra)	(27) 23.11.94
15	Jerome **ROUSSILLON** (Fra)	(28) 06.01.93
19	Kevin **MBABU** (Sui)	(26) 19.04.95
20	Ridle **BAKU**	(23) 08.04.98
25	John **BROOKS** (USA)	(28) 28.01.93
38	Jannis **LANG**	(19) 12.07.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	Aster **VRANCKX** (Bel)	(19) 04.10.02
11	Renato **STEFFEN** (Sui)	(30) 03.11.91
17	Maximilian **PHILIPP**	(27) 01.03.94
22	Felix **NMECHA** (Eng)	(21) 10.10.00
23	Josuha **GUILAVOGUI** (Fra)	(31) 19.09.90
24	Xaver **SCHLAGER** (Aut)	(24) 28.09.97
27	Maximilian **ARNOLD**	(27) 27.05.94
31	Yannick **GERHARDT**	(27) 13.03.94
42	Dominik **MARX**	(21) 02.02.00
44	Marvin **STEFANIAK**	(26) 03.02.95

FORWARDS

7	Luca **WALDSCHMIDT**	(25) 19.05.96
9	Wout **WEGHORST** (Ned)	(29) 07.08.92
10	Lukas **NMECHA**	(23) 14.12.98
14	Admir **MEHMEDI** (Sui)	(30) 16.03.91
21	Bartosz **BIALEK** (Pol)	(20) 11.11.01
28	Dodi **LUKEBAKIO** (Bel)	(24) 24.09.97
33	Daniel **GINCZEK**	(30) 13.04.91
48	Gil-Linnart **WALTHER**	(18) 14.03.03

COACH

Florian **KOHFELDT**	(39) 05.10.82

Captain...Casteels is one of four Belgians in the Wolfsburg squad

Ages as of 24.12.21

FRANCE: LIGUE 1 2021-22

ANGERS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Paul **BERNARDONI**	(24) 18.04.97
16	Anthony **MANDREA**	(24) 25.12.96
30	Danijel **PETKOVIC** (Mne)	(28) 25.05.93

DEFENDERS

3	Souleyman **DOUMBIA** (Civ)	(25) 24.09.96
6	Enzo **EBOSSE**	(22) 11.03.99
8	Ismael **TRAORE** (Civ)	(35) 18.08.86
24	Romain **THOMAS**	(33) 12.06.88
25	Abdoulaye **BAMBA** (Civ)	(31) 25.04.90
29	Vincent **MANCEAU**	(32) 10.07.89

MIDFIELDERS

2	Batista **MENDY**	(21) 12.01.00
5	Thomas **MANGANI**	(34) 29.04.87
7	Sofiane **BOUFAL** (Mar)	(28) 17.09.93
10	Angelo **FULGINI**	(25) 20.08.96
12	Zinedine **OULD KHALED**	(21) 14.01.00
15	Pierrick **CAPELLE**	(34) 15.04.87
18	Azzedine **OUNAHI** (Mar)	(21) 19.04.00
23	Antonin **BOBICHON**	(26) 14.09.95
26	Waniss **TAIBI**	(19) 07.03.02
27	Mathias **PEREIRA LAGE** (Por)	(25) 30.11.96

FORWARDS

9	Casimir **NINGA** (Cha)	(28) 17.05.93
11	Jimmy **CABOT**	(27) 18.04.94
14	Bilal **BRAHIMI**	(21) 14.03.00
17	Noah **FATAR**	(19) 15.02.02
19	Stephane **BAHOKEN** (Cmr)	(29) 28.05.92
21	Mohamed **CHO**	(17) 19.01.04
22	Sada **THIOUB**	(26) 01.06.95
28	Farid **EL MELALI** (Alg)	(24) 05.05.97

COACH

Gerald **BATICLE**	(52) 10.09.69

BORDEAUX

GOALKEEPERS

1	Benoit **COSTIL**	(34) 03.07.87
16	Gaetan **POUSSIN**	(22) 13.01.99
30	Darren **SEMEDO**	(19) 27.04.02

DEFENDERS

2	Stian **GREGERSEN** (Nor)	(26) 17.05.95
3	Abdel **MEDIOUB** (Alg)	(24) 28.08.97
4	**MEXER** (Moz)	(33) 08.09.88
6	Laurent **KOSCIELNY**	(36) 10.09.85
12	Ricardo **MANGAS** (Por)	(23) 19.03.98
14	Gideon **MENSAH** (Gha)	(23) 18.07.98
22	Timothee **PEMBELE**	(19) 09.09.02
24	Paul **BAYSSE**	(33) 18.05.88
25	Enock **KWATENG**	(24) 09.04.97
34	Malcom **MPUTU**	(21) 12.02.00

MIDFIELDERS

5	**OTAVIO** (Bra)	(27) 04.05.94
8	Jean **ONANA** (Cmr)	(21) 08.01.00
13	**FRANSERGIO** (Bra)	(31) 18.10.90
19	Yacine **ADLI**	(21) 29.07.00
27	Tom **LACOUX**	(19) 25.01.02
33	Issouf **SISSOKHO** (Mli)	(19) 30.01.02

FORWARDS

7	Jimmy **BRIAND**	(36) 02.08.85
10	Samuel **KALU** (Nga)	(24) 26.08.97
11	Sekou **MARA**	(19) 30.07.02
17	Mehdi **ZERKANE** (Alg)	(22) 15.07.99
18	**HWANG** Ui-Jo (Kor)	(29) 28.08.92
21	Javairo **DILROSUN** (Ned)	(23) 22.06.98
23	M'Baye **NIANG** (Sen)	(27) 19.12.94
28	Remi **OUDIN**	(25) 18.11.96
29	Alberth **ELIS** (Hon)	(25) 12.02.96
31	Amadou **TRAORE**	(19) 07.03.02
32	Dilane **BAKWA**	(19) 26.08.02
37	Logan **DELAURIER-CHAUBET**	(19) 22.04.02

COACH

Vladimir **PETKOVIC** (Bih)	(58) 15.08.63

BREST

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gautier **LARSONNEUR**	(24) 23.02.97
16	Sebastien **CIBOIS**	(23) 02.03.98
30	Gregoire **COUDERT**	(22) 03.04.99
40	Marco **BIZOT** (Ned)	(30) 10.03.91

DEFENDERS

2	Jean-Kevin **DUVERNE**	(24) 12.07.97
3	Lilian **BRASSIER**	(22) 02.11.99
5	Brendan **CHARDONNET**	(27) 22.12.94
17	Denys **BAIN**	(28) 02.07.93
18	Ronael **PIERRE-GABRIEL**	(23) 13.06.98
20	Jere **URONEN** (Fin)	(27) 13.07.94
22	Julien **FAUSSURIER**	(34) 14.01.87
23	Christophe **HERELLE**	(29) 22.08.92
29	Noe **SOW**	(23) 18.12.98

MIDFIELDERS

7	Haris **BELKEBLA** (Alg)	(27) 28.01.94
10	Lucien **AGOUME**	(19) 09.02.02
21	Romain **FAIVRE**	(23) 14.07.98
27	Hugo **MAGNETTI**	(23) 30.05.98
28	Hiang'a **MBOCK**	(21) 28.12.99

FORWARDS

9	Franck **HONORAT**	(25) 11.08.96
14	Irvin **CARDONA**	(24) 08.08.97
15	Steve **MOUNIE** (Ben)	(27) 29.09.94
19	Rafiki **SAID** (Com)	(21) 15.03.00
25	Romain **DEL CASTILLO**	(25) 29.03.96
26	Jeremy **LE DOUARON**	(23) 21.04.98
29	Youssouph **BADJI** (Sen)	(20) 20.12.01
34	Axel **CAMBLAN**	(18) 18.06.03

COACH

Michel **DER ZAKARIAN** (Arm)	(58) 18.02.63

CLERMONT

GOALKEEPERS

1	Arthur **DESMAS**	(27) 07.04.94
16	Lucas **MARGUERON**	(20) 12.02.01
40	Ouparine **DJOCO**	(23) 22.04.98

DEFENDERS

3	Julien **BOYER**	(23) 10.04.98
4	Cedric **HOUNTONDJI** (Ben)	(27) 19.01.94
5	Jean-Claude **BILLONG** (Cmr)	(27) 28.12.93
12	Vital **N'SIMBA** (Cod)	(28) 08.07.93
15	Arial **MENDY** (Sen)	(27) 07.11.94
17	Josue **ALBERT** (Guf)	(29) 21.01.92
20	Akim **ZEDADKA**	(26) 30.05.95
21	Florent **OGIER**	(32) 21.03.89
23	Jerome **PHOJO**	(28) 15.04.93
36	Alidu **SEIDU** (Gha)	(21) 04.06.00

MIDFIELDERS

2	Fred **GNALEGA** (Civ)	(20) 08.10.01
6	Saif-Eddine **KHAOUI** (Tun)	(26) 27.04.95
7	Yohann **MAGNIN**	(24) 21.06.97
8	Jason **BERTHOMIER**	(31) 06.01.90
10	Jonathan **IGLESIAS** (Uru)	(33) 17.12.88
11	Jim **ALLEVINAH** (Gab)	(26) 27.02.95
19	Salis **ABDUL SAMED** (Gha)	(21) 26.03.00
22	Oriol **BUSQUETS** (Spa)	(22) 20.01.99
24	Jodel **DOSSOU** (Ben)	(29) 17.03.92
25	Johan **GASTIEN**	(33) 25.01.88

FORWARDS

9	Jordan **TELL** (Glp)	(24) 10.06.97
18	Elbasan **RASHANI** (Kvx)	(28) 09.05.93
26	Pierre-Yves **HAMEL**	(27) 03.02.94
27	Mohamed **BAYO** (Gui)	(23) 04.06.98
28	Yadaly **DIABY**	(21) 09.08.00
33	Karim **MOHAMED**	(20) 02.04.01
34	Aiman **MAURER**	(17) 25.09.04

COACH

Pascal **GASTIEN**	(58) 02.12.63

LENS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Wuilker **FARINEZ** (Ven)	(23) 15.02.98
16	Jean-Louis **LECA**	(36) 21.09.85
40	Yannick **PANDOR** (Mad)	(20) 01.05.01

DEFENDERS

3	Deiver **MACHADO** (Col)	(28) 02.09.93
4	Kevin **DANSO** (Aut)	(23) 19.09.98
5	Christopher **WOOH**	(20) 18.09.01
11	Jonathan **CLAUSS**	(29) 25.09.92
14	Facundo **MEDINA** (Arg)	(22) 28.05.99
21	Massadio **HAIDARA** (Mli)	(29) 02.12.92
24	Jonathan **GRADIT**	(29) 24.11.92
35	Malcom **MUSQUET**	(19) 15.04.02
37	Yann **KEMBO**	(19) 20.03.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	Seko **FOFANA** (Civ)	(26) 07.05.95
10	Gael **KAKUTA** (Cod)	(30) 21.06.91
18	Yannick **CAHUZAC**	(36) 18.01.85
20	David **COSTA** (Por)	(20) 05.01.01
28	Cheick **DOUCOURE** (Mli)	(21) 08.01.00
29	Przemyslaw **FRANKOWSKI** (Pol)	(26) 12.04.95
33	Mamadou **CAMARA** (Sen)	(19) 15.10.02
33	Samba **SOW** (Mli)	(32) 29.04.89
34	Jonathan **VARANE**	(20) 09.09.01

FORWARDS

7	Florian **SOTOCA**	(31) 25.10.90
9	Ignatius **GANAGO** (Cmr)	(22) 16.02.99
15	Arnaud **KALIMUENDO**	(19) 20.01.02
22	Wesley **SAID**	(26) 19.04.95
25	Corentin **JEAN**	(26) 15.07.95
27	Charles **BOLI**	(23) 30.08.98
33	Ibrahima **BALDE**	(18) 17.01.03
33	Mohamed **CISSE**	(20) 26.04.01

COACH

Franck **HAISE**	(50) 15.04.71

LILLE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ivo **GRBIC** (Cro)	(25) 18.01.96
16	Adam **JAKUBECH** (Svk)	(24) 02.01.97
30	Leo **JARDIM** (Bra)	(26) 20.03.95
40	Jules **RAUX**	(18) 29.08.03
	Orestis **KARNEZIS** (Gre)	(36) 11.07.85

DEFENDERS

2	Zeki **CELIK** (Tur)	(24) 17.02.97
3	Tiago **DJALO** (Por)	(21) 09.04.00
4	Sven **BOTMAN** (Ned)	(21) 12.01.00
5	Gabriel **GUDMUNDSSON** (Swe)	(22) 29.04.99
6	Jose **FONTE** (Por)	(38) 22.12.83
26	Jeremy **PIED**	(32) 23.02.89
28	**REINILDO** (Moz)	(27) 21.01.94
29	Domagoj **BRADARIC** (Cro)	(22) 10.12.99
33	Kouadio-Yves **DABILA** (Civ)	(24) 01.01.97
34	Nassim **INNOCENTI**	(19) 19.02.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	**XEKA** (Por)	(27) 10.11.94
11	Yusuf **YAZICI** (Tur)	(24) 29.01.97
15	Eugenio **PIZZUTO** (Mex)	(19) 13.05.02
18	Renato **SANCHES** (Por)	(24) 18.08.97
20	Angel **GOMES** (Eng)	(21) 31.08.00
21	Benjamin **ANDRE**	(31) 03.08.90
24	Amadou **ONANA** (Bel)	(20) 16.08.01
27	Cheikh **NIASSE** (Sen)	(21) 19.01.00
34	Rocco **ASCONE**	(18) 12.09.03

FORWARDS

7	Jonathan **BAMBA**	(25) 26.03.96
9	Jonathan **DAVID** (Can)	(21) 14.01.00
10	Jonathan **IKONE**	(23) 02.05.98
17	Burak **YILMAZ** (Tur)	(36) 15.07.85
19	Isaac **LIHADJI**	(19) 10.04.02
22	Timothy **WEAH** (USA)	(21) 22.02.00
34	Exauce **BOULA**	(19) 15.05.02
35	**CAPITA** (Ang)	(19) 10.01.02
39	Jose **BICA** (Por)	(18) 16.06.03

COACH

Jocelyn **GOURVENNEC**	(49) 22.03.72

LORIENT

GOALKEEPERS

1	Matthieu **DREYER**	(32) 20.03.89
16	Teddy **BARTOUCHE**	(24) 05.06.97
30	Paul **NARDI**	(27) 18.05.94

DEFENDERS

2	**IGOR SILVA** (Bra)	(25) 21.08.96
3	Moritz **JENZ** (Ger)	(22) 30.04.99
5	Thomas **FONTAINE** (Mad)	(30) 08.05.91
14	Jerome **HERGAULT**	(35) 05.04.86
15	Julien **LAPORTE**	(28) 04.11.93
17	Houboulang **MENDES**	(23) 04.05.98
20	Samuel **LORIC**	(21) 05.07.00
21	Jeremy **MOREL** (Mad)	(37) 02.04.84
25	Vincent **LE GOFF**	(32) 15.10.89
33	Loris **MOUYOKOLO**	(20) 22.05.01
36	Leo **PETROT**	(24) 15.04.97
37	Theo **LE BRIS**	(19) 01.10.02

MIDFIELDERS

6	Laurent **ABERGEL**	(28) 01.02.93
10	Enzo **LE FEE**	(21) 03.02.00
11	Quentin **BOISGARD**	(24) 17.03.97
18	Fabien **LEMOINE**	(34) 16.03.87
23	Thomas **MONCONDUIT**	(30) 10.02.91
31	Redwan **BOURLES**	(18) 02.01.03
33	Sambou **SOUMANO** (Sen)	(20) 03.01.01
34	Bamo **MEITE** (Civ)	(20) 20.06.01
36	Ronny **LABONNE**	(24) 14.09.97

FORWARDS

7	Stephane **DIARRA** (Civ)	(23) 09.12.98
13	Terem **MOFFI** (Nga)	(22) 25.05.99
27	Adrian **GRBIC** (Aut)	(25) 04.08.96
28	Armand **LAURIENTE**	(23) 04.12.98
33	Dango **OUATTARA** (Bfa)	(19) 11.02.02
34	Baptiste **MOUAZAN**	(20) 27.09.01

COACH

Christophe **PELISSIER**	(56) 05.10.65

LYON

GOALKEEPERS

1	Anthony **LOPES** (Por)	(31) 01.10.90
16	Malcolm **BARCOLA** (Tog)	(22) 14.05.99
30	Julian **POLLERSBECK** (Ger)	(27) 16.08.94
40	Kayne **BONNEVIE**	(20) 22.07.01

DEFENDERS

2	Sinaly **DIOMANDE** (Civ)	(20) 09.04.01
3	**EMERSON** (Ita)	(27) 03.08.94
4	Castello **LUKEBA**	(19) 17.12.02
5	Jason **DENAYER** (Bel)	(26) 28.06.95
6	**MARCELO** (Bra)	(34) 20.05.87
12	**HENRIQUE** (Bra)	(27) 25.04.94
14	Leo **DUBOIS**	(27) 14.09.94
17	Malo **GUSTO**	(18) 19.05.03
21	Damien **DA SILVA**	(33) 17.05.88
27	Jerome **BOATENG** (Ger)	(33) 03.09.88
52	Hugo **VOGEL**	(17) 04.01.04

MIDFIELDERS

8	Houssem **AOUAR**	(23) 30.06.98
10	Lucas **PAQUETA** (Bra)	(24) 27.08.97
18	Rayan **CHERKI**	(18) 17.08.03
23	Thiago **MENDES** (Bra)	(29) 15.03.92
25	Maxence **CAQUERET**	(21) 15.02.00
28	Florent **DA SILVA**	(18) 02.04.03
39	**BRUNO GUIMARAES** (Bra)	(24) 16.11.97
44	Titouan **THOMAS**	(19) 12.01.02

FORWARDS

7	Karl **TOKO EKAMBI** (Cmr)	(29) 14.09.92
9	Moussa **DEMBELE**	(25) 12.07.96
11	Tino **KADEWERE** (Zim)	(25) 05.01.96
15	Sekou **LEGA**	(18) 21.01.03
16	Habib **KEITA** (Mli)	(19) 05.02.02
20	Islam **SLIMANI** (Alg)	(33) 18.06.88
29	Xherdan **SHAQIRI** (Sui)	(30) 10.10.91
33	Gael **NSOMBI**	(18) 25.01.03
45	Bradley **BARCOLA**	(19) 02.09.02

COACH

Peter **BOSZ** (Ned)	(58) 21.11.63

MARSEILLE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Simon **NGAPANDOUETNBU** (Cmr)	(18) 12.04.03
16	Pau **LOPEZ** (Spa)	(27) 13.12.94
30	Steve **MANDANDA**	(36) 28.03.85
40	Ahmadou **DIA**	(22) 13.10.99

DEFENDERS

2	William **SALIBA**	(20) 24.03.01
3	**ALVARO** (Spa)	(31) 08.01.90
5	Leonardo **BALERDI** (Arg)	(22) 26.01.99
14	**LUAN PERES** (Bra)	(27) 19.07.94
15	Duje **CALETA-CAR** (Cro)	(25) 17.09.96
23	Jordan **AMAVI**	(27) 09.03.94
29	Pol **LIROLA** (Spa)	(24) 13.08.97
35	Aaron **KAMARDIN**	(19) 08.04.02

MIDFIELDERS

4	Boubacar **KAMARA**	(22) 23.11.99
6	Matteo **GUENDOUZI**	(22) 14.04.99
7	Amine **HARIT** (Mar)	(24) 18.06.97
8	**GERSON** (Bra)	(24) 20.05.97
17	Cengiz **UNDER** (Tur)	(24) 14.07.97
21	Valentin **RONGIER**	(27) 07.12.94
22	Pape **GUEYE** (Sen)	(22) 24.01.99
26	Oussama **TARGHALLINE** (Mar)	(19) 20.05.02
31	Ugo **BERTELLI**	(18) 15.07.03
34	Paolo **SCIORTINO**	(18) 05.11.03
36	Jonathan **PITOU**	(17) 11.08.04
41	Cheick **SOUARE**	(19) 03.09.02

FORWARDS

10	Dimitri **PAYET**	(34) 29.03.87
11	**LUIS HENRIQUE** (Bra)	(20) 14.12.01
12	Bamba **DIENG** (Sen)	(21) 23.03.00
19	Arkadiusz **MILIK** (Pol)	(27) 28.02.94
20	Konrad **DE LA FUENTE** (USA)	(20) 16.07.01
32	Salim Ben **SEGHIR**	(18) 24.02.03
39	Bilal **NADIR**	(18) 28.11.03

COACH

Jorge **SAMPAOLI** (Arg)	(61) 13.03.60

METZ

GOALKEEPERS

16	Alexandre **OUKIDJA** (Alg)	(33) 19.07.88
30	Marc-Aurele **CAILLARD**	(27) 12.05.94
40	Ousmane **BA** (Sen)	(19) 06.06.02

DEFENDERS

2	Dylan **BRONN** (Tun)	(26) 19.06.95
3	Matthieu **UDOL**	(25) 20.03.96
4	Sikou **NIAKATE** (Mli)	(22) 10.07.99
5	**JEMERSON** (Bra)	(29) 24.08.92
17	Thomas **DELAINE**	(29) 24.03.92
18	Fabien **CENTONZE**	(25) 16.01.96
22	Sofiane **ALAKOUCH** (Mar)	(23) 29.07.98
23	Boubacar **KOUYATE** (Mli)	(24) 15.04.97
25	William **MIKELBRENCIS**	(17) 25.02.04
28	Manuel **CABIT** (Mtq)	(28) 03.06.93
29	Lenny **LACROIX**	(18) 06.02.03

MIDFIELDERS

6	Kevin **N'DORAM**	(25) 22.01.96
8	Boubacar **TRAORE** (Mli)	(20) 20.08.01
12	Warren **TCHIMBEMBE**	(23) 21.04.98
14	Vincent **PAJOT**	(31) 19.08.90
15	Pape **SARR** (Sen)	(19) 14.09.02
19	Habib **MAIGA** (Civ)	(25) 01.01.96
21	Amine **BASSI** (Mar)	(24) 27.11.97
26	Papa **YADE** (Sen)	(21) 05.01.00
33	Amadou **MBENGUE** (Sen)	(19) 05.01.02

FORWARDS

7	Ibrahima **NIANE** (Sen)	(22) 11.03.99
9	Nicolas **DE PREVILLE**	(30) 08.01.91
10	Farid **BOULAYA** (Alg)	(28) 25.02.93
11	Opa **NGUETTE** (Sen)	(27) 08.07.94
13	Cheikh **SABALY** (Sen)	(22) 04.03.99
20	Mamadou **GUEYE** (Sen)	(23) 13.03.98
24	Lenny **JOSEPH**	(21) 12.10.00

COACH

Frederic **ANTONETTI**	(60) 19.08.61

MONACO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Radoslaw **MAJECKI** (Pol)	(22) 16.11.99
16	Alexander **NUBEL** (Ger)	(25) 30.09.96
30	Vito **MANNONE** (Ita)	(33) 02.03.88
40	Yann **LIENARD**	(18) 16.03.03

DEFENDERS

3	Guillermo **MARIPAN** (Chi)	(27) 06.05.94
5	Benoit **BADIASHILE**	(20) 26.03.01
6	Axel **DISASI**	(23) 11.03.98
12	**CAIO HENRIQUE** (Bra)	(24) 31.07.97
14	Ismail **JAKOBS** (Ger)	(22) 17.08.99
19	Djibril **SIDIBE**	(29) 29.07.92
21	Strahinja **PAVLOVIC** (Srb)	(20) 24.05.01
26	Ruben **AGUILAR**	(28) 26.04.93
34	Chrislain **MATSIMA**	(19) 15.05.02

MIDFIELDERS

4	Cesc **FABREGAS** (Spa)	(34) 04.05.87
8	Aurelien **TCHOUAMENI**	(21) 27.01.00
11	**JEAN LUCAS** (Bra)	(23) 22.06.98
17	Aleksandr **GOLOVIN** (Rus)	(25) 30.05.96
22	Youssouf **FOFANA**	(22) 10.01.99
33	Maghnes **AKLIOUCHE**	(19) 25.02.02
36	Eliot **MATAZO** (Bel)	(19) 15.02.02
37	Sofiane **DIOP**	(21) 09.06.00
41	Felix **LEMARECHAL**	(18) 07.08.03

FORWARDS

7	Gelson **MARTINS** (Por)	(26) 11.05.95
9	Myron **BOADU** (Ned)	(20) 14.01.01
10	Wissam **BEN YEDDER**	(31) 12.08.90
27	Krepin **DIATTA** (Sen)	(22) 25.02.99
31	Kevin **VOLLAND** (Ger)	(29) 30.07.92
39	Wilson **ISIDOR**	(21) 27.08.00

COACH

Niko **KOVAC** (Cro)	(50) 15.10.71

MONTPELLIER

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jonas **OMLIN** (Sui)	(27) 10.01.94
16	Dimitry **BERTAUD**	(23) 06.06.98
30	Matis **CARVALHO** (Por)	(22) 28.04.99

DEFENDERS

2	Arnaud **SOUQUET**	(29) 12.02.92
3	Mamadou **SAKHO**	(31) 13.02.90
5	Pedro **MENDES** (Por)	(31) 01.10.90
6	Junior **SAMBIA**	(25) 07.09.96
8	Ambroise **OYONGO** (Cmr)	(30) 22.06.91
17	Thibault **TAMAS**	(20) 20.02.01
22	Mathias **SUAREZ** (Uru)	(25) 24.06.96
26	**THULER** (Bra)	(22) 10.03.99
31	Nicolas **COZZA**	(22) 08.01.99
36	Redouane **HALHAL**	(18) 05.03.03

MIDFIELDERS

7	Mihailo **RISTIC** (Srb)	(26) 31.10.95
11	Teji **SAVANIER**	(30) 22.12.91
12	Jordan **FERRI**	(29) 12.03.92
13	Joris **CHOTARD**	(20) 24.09.01
18	Leo **LEROY**	(21) 14.02.00
25	Florent **MOLLET**	(30) 19.11.91
34	Maxime **ESTEVE**	(19) 26.05.02
35	Sacha **DELAYE**	(19) 23.04.02

FORWARDS

9	Valere **GERMAIN**	(31) 17.04.90
19	Stephy **MAVIDIDI** (Eng)	(23) 31.05.98
20	Yanis **GUERMOUCHE**	(20) 15.04.01
21	Elye **WAHI**	(18) 02.01.03
23	Nicholas **GIOACCHINI** (USA)	(21) 25.07.00
28	Beni **MAKOUANA** (Cgo)	(19) 28.09.02

COACH

Olivier **DALL'OGLIO**	(57) 16.05.64

NANTES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alban **LAFONT**	(22) 23.01.99
16	Remy **DESCAMPS**	(25) 25.06.96
30	Denis **PETRIC** (Srb)	(33) 24.05.88
40	Charly **JAN**	(22) 27.05.99

DEFENDERS

2	**FABIO** (Bra)	(31) 09.07.90
3	**ANDREI** (Bra)	(29) 17.02.92
4	Nicolas **PALLOIS**	(34) 19.09.87
12	Dennis **APPIAH**	(29) 09.06.92
14	Charles **TRAORE** (Mli)	(29) 01.01.92
21	Jean-Charles **CASTELLETTO** (Cmr)	(26) 26.01.95
24	Sebastien **CORCHIA**	(31) 01.11.90
33	Abdoulaye **SYLLA** (Gui)	(21) 10.04.00

MIDFIELDERS

5	Pedro **CHIRIVELLA** (Spa)	(24) 23.05.97
6	Roli **PEREIRA DE SA**	(25) 10.12.96
8	Wylan **CYPRIEN**	(26) 28.01.95
10	Ludovic **BLAS**	(23) 31.12.97
18	Samuel **MOUTOUSSAMY** (Cod)	(25) 12.08.96
31	Gor **MANVELYAN**	(19) 09.04.02
33	Yannis **M'BEMBA**	(20) 01.07.01

FORWARDS

7	Kalifa **COULIBALY** (Mli)	(30) 21.08.91
11	Marcus **COCON**	(25) 24.06.96
17	Anthony **LIMBOMBE** (Bel)	(27) 15.07.94
19	Willem **GEUBBELS**	(20) 16.08.01
20	Jean-Kevin **AUGUSTIN**	(24) 16.06.97
23	Randal **KOLO MUANI** (Cod)	(23) 05.12.98
26	Osman **BUKARIN** (Gha)	(23) 13.12.98
27	Moses **SIMON** (Nga)	(26) 12.07.95
28	Renaud **EMOND** (Bel)	(30) 05.12.91
29	Quentin **MERLIN**	(19) 16.05.02

COACH

Antoine **KOMBOUARE**	(58) 16.11.63

NICE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marcin **BULKA** (Pol)	(22) 04.10.99
16	Teddy **BOULHENDI**	(20) 09.04.01
40	Walter **BENITEZ** (Arg)	(28) 19.01.93

DEFENDERS

3	Robson **BAMBU** (Bra)	(24) 12.11.97
4	**DANTE** (Bra)	(38) 18.10.83
5	Flavius **DANILIUC** (Aut)	(20) 27.04.01
13	Hassane **KAMARAN** (Civ)	(27) 05.03.94
20	Youcef **ATAL** (Alg)	(25) 17.05.96
23	Jordan **LOTOMBA** (Sui)	(23) 29.09.98
25	Jean-Clair **TODIBO**	(21) 30.12.99
26	Melvin **BARD**	(21) 06.11.00

MIDFIELDERS

6	Morgan **SCHNEIDERLIN**	(32) 08.11.89
8	Pablo **ROSARIO** (Ned)	(24) 07.01.97
18	Mario **LEMINA** (Gab)	(28) 01.09.93
19	Khephren **THURAM**	(20) 26.03.01
28	Hichem **BOUDAOUI** (Alg)	(22) 23.09.99
33	Justin **SMITH** (Can)	(18) 04.02.03

FORWARDS

7	Andy **DELORT** (Alg)	(30) 09.10.91
9	Kasper **DOLBERG** (Den)	(24) 06.10.97
10	Alexis **CLAUDE-MAURICE**	(23) 06.06.98
11	Amine **GOUIRI**	(21) 16.02.00
21	Justin **KLUIVERT** (Ned)	(22) 05.05.99
22	Calvin **STENGS** (Ned)	(23) 18.12.98
24	Evann **GUESSAND**	(20) 01.07.01
29	Lucas **DA CUNHA**	(20) 09.06.01

COACH

Christophe **GALTIER**	(55) 26.08.66

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Keylor **NAVAS** (Crc)	(35) 15.12.16
16	Sergio **RICO** (Spa)	(28) 01.09.93
40	Denis **FRANCHI** (Ita)	(19) 22.10.02
50	Gianluigi **DONNARUMMA** (Ita)	(22) 25.02.99
60	Alexandre **LETELLIER**	(31) 11.12.90

DEFENDERS

2	Achraf **HAKIMI** (Mar)	(23) 04.11.98
3	Presnel **KIMPEMBE**	(26) 13.08.95
4	Sergio **RAMOS** (Spa)	(35) 30.03.86
5	**MARQUINHOS** (Bra)	(27) 14.05.94
14	Juan **BERNAT** (Spa)	(28) 01.03.93
17	Colin **DAGBA**	(23) 09.09.98
20	Layvin **KURZAWA**	(29) 04.09.92
22	Abdou **DIALLO** (Sen)	(25) 04.05.96
24	Thilo **KEHRER** (Ger)	(25) 21.09.96
25	Nuno **MENDES** (Por)	(19) 19.06.02
31	El Chadaille **BITSHIABU**	(16) 16.05.05
32	Teddy **ALLOH**	(19) 23.01.02

MIDFIELDERS

6	Marco **VERRATTI** (Ita)	(29) 05.11.92
8	Leandro **PAREDES** (Arg)	(27) 29.06.94
11	Angel **DI MARIA** (Arg)	(33) 14.02.88
12	**RAFINHA** (Bra)	(28) 12.02.93
15	**DANILO** Pereira (Por)	(30) 09.09.91
18	Georginio **WIJNALDUM** (Ned)	(31) 11.11.90
21	Ander **HERRERA** (Spa)	(32) 14.08.89
23	Julian **DRAXLER** (Ger)	(28) 20.09.93
27	Idrissa **GUEYE** (Sen)	(32) 26.09.89
34	Xavi **SIMONS** (Ned)	(18) 21.04.03
35	Ismael **GHARBI**	(17) 10.04.04
38	Edouard **MICHUT**	(18) 04.03.03
39	Nathan **BITUMAZALA**	(19) 10.12.02

FORWARDS

7	Kylian **MBAPPE**	(23) 20.12.98
9	Mauro **ICARDI** (Arg)	(28) 19.02.93
10	**NEYMAR** (Bra)	(29) 05.02.92
28	Eric **DINA-EBIMBE**	(21) 21.11.00
30	Lionel **MESSI** (Arg)	(34) 24.06.87
33	Sekou **YANSANE** (Gui)	(18) 28.04.03

COACH

Mauricio **POCHETTINO** (Arg)	(49) 02.03.72

REIMS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Predrag **RAJKOVIC** (Srb)	(26) 31.10.95
16	Yehvann **DIOUF**	(22) 16.11.99
30	Nicolas **PENNETEAU**	(40) 28.02.81

DEFENDERS

2	Wout **FAES** (Bel)	(23) 03.04.98
3	Ghislain **KONAN** (Civ)	(25) 27.12.95
5	Yunis **ABDELHAMID** (Mar)	(34) 28.09.87
6	Andreaw **GRAVILLON** (Glp)	(23) 08.02.98
28	Bradley **LOCKO**	(19) 06.05.02
29	Moustapha **MBOW** (Sen)	(21) 08.03.00
32	Thomas **FOKET** (Bel)	(27) 25.09.94
33	Fode **DOUCOURE** (Mli)	(20) 03.02.01

MIDFIELDERS

14	Valon **BERISHA** (Kvx)	(28) 07.02.93
15	Marshall **MUNETSI** (Zim)	(25) 22.06.96
20	Ilan **KEBBAL**	(23) 10.07.98
21	Azor **MATUSIWA** (Ned)	(23) 28.04.98
23	Moreto **CASSAMA** (Gnb)	(23) 16.02.98
24	Mathieu **CAFARO**	(24) 25.03.97
25	Moussa **DOUMBIA** (Mli)	(27) 15.08.94
33	Sambou **SISSOKO**	(22) 27.04.99
34	Dion **LOPY** (Sen)	(19) 02.02.02

FORWARDS

10	Arber **ZENELI** (Kvx)	(26) 25.02.95
12	Alexis **FLIPS**	(21) 18.01.00
17	Anastasios **DONIS** (Gre)	(25) 29.08.96
19	Mitchell **VAN BERGEN** (Ned)	(22) 27.08.99
21	Nathanael **MBUKU**	(19) 16.03.02
22	Hugo **EKITIKE**	(19) 20.06.02
27	El Bilal **TOURE** (Mli)	(20) 03.10.01
34	N'Dri Philippe **KOFFI**	(19) 09.03.02

COACH

Oscar **GARCIA** (Spa)	(48) 26.04.73

RENNES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Romain **SALIN**	(37) 29.07.84
16	Alfred **GOMIS** (Sen)	(28) 05.09.93
30	Pepe **BONET** (Cgo)	(18) 13.02.03
40	Dogan **ALEMDAR** (Tur)	(19) 29.10.02

DEFENDERS

3	Adrien **TRUFFERT**	(20) 20.11.01
4	Loic **BADE**	(21) 11.04.00
6	Nayef **AGUERD** (Mar)	(25) 30.03.96
22	Lorenz **ASSIGNON**	(21) 22.06.00
23	Warmed **OMARI**	(21) 23.04.00
25	Birger **MELING** (Nor)	(27) 17.12.94
27	Hamari **TRAORE** (Mli)	(29) 27.01.92

MIDFIELDERS

8	Baptiste **SANTAMARIA**	(26) 09.03.95
14	Benjamin **BOURIGEAUD**	(27) 14.01.94
20	Flavien **TAIT**	(28) 02.02.93
21	Lovro **MAJER** (Cro)	(23) 17.01.98
26	Chimuanya **UGOCHUKWU**	(17) 26.03.04
28	Jonas **MARTIN**	(31) 09.04.90

FORWARDS

7	Martin **TERRIER**	(24) 04.03.97
9	Serhou **GUIRASSY**	(25) 12.03.96
10	**KAMALDEEN** Sulemana (Gha)	(19) 15.02.02
11	Jeremy **DOKU** (Bel)	(19) 27.05.02
17	Loum **TCHAOUNA**	(18) 08.09.03
18	Matthis **ABLINE**	(18) 28.03.03
19	Andy **DIOUF**	(18) 17.05.03
19	Metehan **GUCLU** (Tur)	(22) 02.04.99
24	Gaetan **LABORDE**	(27) 03.05.94
39	Mathys **TEL**	(16) 27.04.05

COACH

Bruno **GENESIO**	(55) 01.09.66

SAINT-ETIENNE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Stefan **BAJIC**	(20) 23.12.01
16	Boubacar **FALL** (Sen)	(20) 03.02.01
40	Etienne **GREEN** (Eng)	(21) 19.07.00
60	Nabil **OUENNAS**	(18) 12.07.03

DEFENDERS

2	Harold **MOUKOUDI** (Cmr)	(24) 27.11.97
3	Lucas **CALODAT**	(19) 06.02.02
4	Saidou **SOW** (Gui)	(19) 04.07.02
5	Timothee **KOLODZIEJCZAK**	(30) 01.10.91
11	**GABRIEL SILVA** (Bra)	(30) 13.05.91
13	Miguel **TRAUCO** (Per)	(29) 25.08.92
22	Alpha **SISSOKO**	(24) 07.03.97
27	Yvann **MACON**	(23) 01.10.98
31	Bryan **NOKOUE** (Cmr)	(19) 23.05.02
33	Mickael **NADE**	(22) 04.03.99

MIDFIELDERS

6	Lucas **GOURNA-DOUATH**	(18) 05.08.03
7	Ryad **BOUDEBOUZ** (Alg)	(31) 19.02.90
8	Mahdi **CAMARA**	(23) 30.06.98
15	Bilal **BENKHEDIM**	(20) 20.04.01
17	Adil **AOUCHICHE**	(19) 15.07.02
19	Yvan **NEYOU** (Cmr)	(24) 03.01.97
25	Assane **DIOUSSE** (Sen)	(24) 20.09.97
28	Zaydou **YOUSSOUF**	(22) 11.07.99
29	Aimen **MOUEFFEK**	(20) 09.04.01
34	Ahmed **SIDIBE**	(19) 10.02.02
37	Mathys **SABAN**	(19) 15.05.02

FORWARDS

9	Ignacio **RAMIREZ** (Uru)	(24) 01.02.97
10	Wahbi **KHAZRI** (Tun)	(30) 08.02.91
14	Jean-Philippe **KRASSO** (Civ)	(24) 17.07.97
18	Arnaud **NORDIN**	(23) 17.06.98
20	Denis **BOUANGA** (Gab)	(27) 11.11.94
21	Romain **HAMOUMA**	(34) 29.03.87
26	Maxence **RIVERA**	(19) 30.05.02
32	El Hadji **DIEYE** (Sen)	(19) 06.06.02

COACH

Vacant

STRASBOURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Matz **SELS** (Bel)	(29) 26.02.92
16	Eiji **KAWASHIMA** (Jap)	(38) 20.03.83
30	Bingourou **KAMARA** (Sen)	(25) 21.10.96

DEFENDERS

2	Frederic **GUILBERT**	(27) 24.12.94
4	Karol **FILA** (Pol)	(23) 13.06.98
5	Lucas **PERRIN**	(23) 19.11.98
19	Anthony **CACI**	(24) 01.07.97
22	Gerzino **NYAMSI**	(24) 22.01.97
23	Maxime **LE MARCHAND**	(32) 11.10.89
24	Alexander **DJIKU** (Gha)	(27) 09.08.94
33	Marvin **ELIMBI**	(18) 20.02.03

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jean-Eudes **AHOLOU** (Civ)	(27) 20.03.94
10	Adrien **THOMASSON**	(28) 10.12.93
11	Dimitri **LIENARD**	(33) 13.02.88
14	Sanjin **PRCIC** (Bih)	(28) 20.11.93
17	Jean **BELLEGARDE**	(23) 27.06.98
27	Ibrahima **SISSOKO**	(24) 27.10.97
33	Mouhamadou **DIARRA**	(17) 03.01.04
34	Nordin **KANDIL**	(20) 31.10.01
37	Aymeric **AHMED**	(18) 08.11.03

FORWARDS

8	Majeed **WARIS** (Gha)	(30) 19.09.91
9	Kevin **GAMEIRO**	(34) 09.05.87
12	Lebo **MOTHIBA** (Saf)	(25) 28.01.96
25	Ludovic **AJORQUE**	(27) 25.02.94
28	Habib **DIALLO** (Sen)	(26) 18.06.95
31	Moise **SAHI** (Civ)	(20) 20.12.01

COACH

Julien **STEPHANE**	(41) 18.09.80

TROYES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ryan **BOUALLAK**	(22) 19.08.99
16	Sebastien **RENOT**	(32) 11.11.89
30	Gauthier **GALLON**	(28) 23.04.93
40	Jessy **MOULIN**	(35) 13.01.86

DEFENDERS

2	Erik **PALMER-BROWN** (USA)	(24) 24.04.97
3	Youssouf **KONE** (Mli)	(26) 05.07.95
4	Giulian **BIANCONE**	(21) 31.03.00
8	Jimmy **GIRAUDON**	(29) 16.01.92
13	Gabriel **MUTOMBO**	(25) 19.01.96
17	Yoann **SALMIER** (Guf)	(29) 21.11.92
19	Oualid **EL HAJJAM** (Mar)	(30) 19.02.91
21	Philippe **SANDLER** (Ned)	(24) 10.02.97
22	Yasser **LAROUCI**	(20) 01.01.01
23	Adil **RAMI**	(35) 27.12.85
29	Issa **KABORE** (Bfa)	(20) 12.05.01
34	Rudy **KOHON**	(17) 23.05.04
35	Tanguy **BANHIE-ZOUKROU**	(18) 07.05.03

MIDFIELDERS

5	Tristan **DINGOME**	(30) 17.02.91
6	Rominigue **KOUAME** (Mli)	(25) 17.12.96
10	Florian **TARDIEU**	(29) 22.04.92
14	Dylan **CHAMBOST**	(24) 19.08.97
15	Karim **AZAMOUM**	(31) 17.01.90
18	Calvin **BOMBO**	(22) 18.01.99
20	Renaud **RIPART**	(28) 14.03.93
21	Eden **MASSOUEMA** (Cgo)	(24) 29.06.97
24	Xavier **CHAVALERIN**	(30) 07.03.91
27	Brandon **DOMINGUES**	(21) 06.06.00
33	Derek **MAZOU-SACKO**	(17) 06.10.04

FORWARDS

7	Yoann **TOUZGHAR** (Tun)	(35) 28.11.86
9	**SUK** Hyun-Jun (Kor)	(30) 29.06.91
11	Gerson **RODRIGUES** (Lux)	(26) 20.06.95
12	Levi **LUMEKA** (Eng)	(23) 05.09.98
25	Mama **BALDE** (Gnb)	(26) 06.11.95
26	Patrick **ROBERTS** (Eng)	(24) 05.02.97
28	Nassim **CHADLI** (Mar)	(20) 28.07.01

COACH

Laurent **BATLLES**	(46) 23.09.75

(Ages as of 24.12.21)

Internationals

2022 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

EUROPE Section

● *13 finals places available*

Group A

Nov 11 – Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Salahli 82)
Luxembourg 3 (Rodrigues 67, 90+1, S. Thill 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Schuttengruber (Aut)
Azerbaijan: Mahammadaliyev – Mustafazade, Krivotsyuk, Medvedev, Qarayev, Makhmudov, Ozobic (Akhmedzade 68), Salahli (Abdullayev 83), Mutallimov, Sheydaev (Dadachov 68), Emreli (Alasgarov 83). *Sent off: Mutallimov 21.*
Luxembourg: Schon – Carlson, Chanot, Pinto, Jans (Bohnert 72), O. Thill (Olesen 88), Barreiro, Martins Pereira, Borges Sanches (Deville 57), Sinani (S. Thill 72), Rodrigues.

Nov 11 – Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
Portugal 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gil Manzano (Spa)
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Coleman, Duffy, Egan, Doherty, Cullen, Hendrick (Hourihane 78), Stevens (McClean 78), Robinson, McGrath (Idah 61), Ogbene (Keane 90+1).
Portugal: Patricio – Semedo, Pepe, Danilo, Dalot, Palhinha, Nunes (Moutinho 57), Fernandes (Sanches 75), Guedes (Leao 56, Fonte 83), A. Silva (Felix 75), Ronaldo. *Sent off: Pepe 81.*

Nov 14 – Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Rep. Ireland 3 (Duffy 67, Ogbene 75, Robinson 88)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bognar (Hun)
Luxembourg: Schon – Selimovic, Chanot, Martins Pereira (S. Thill 86), Pinto, Jans, O. Thill, Barreiro, Borges Sanches (Deville 52), Sinani, Rodrigues.
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Coleman, Duffy, Egan, Doherty (Parrott 90), Cullen (Hourihane 90), Hendrick, McClean, Ogbene (Browne 82), Robinson (Omobamidele 90), Idah (Knight 62).

Nov 14 – Lisbon
Portugal 1 (Sanches 2)
Serbia 2 (Tadic 33, A. Mitrovic 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)
Portugal: Patricio – Cancelo, Fonte, Dias, Mendes, Danilo (A. Silva 90+2), Moutinho (Palhinha 64), Sanches (Neves 84), Ronaldo, Jota (Felix 83), B Silva (Fernandes 64).
Serbia: Rajkovic – Milenkovic, Veljkovic (Spajic 65), Pavlovic, Zivkovic (Radonjic 69), Lukic, Gudelj (A. Mitrovic 46), Milinkovic-Savic, Kostic (Jovic 86), Tadic, Vlahovic.

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia (Q)	8	6	2	0	18	9	20
Portugal (P)	8	5	2	1	17	6	17
Rep. Ireland	8	3	3	3	11	8	9
Luxembourg	8	4	0	5	8	18	9
Azerbaijan	8	0	1	7	5	18	1

Group B

Nov 11 – Batumi
Georgia 2 (Kvaratskhelia 61, 77)
Sweden 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gozubuyuk (Ned)
Georgia: Loria – Kashia, Khocholava, Kakabadze, Kvekveskiri (Aburjania 90), Gvilia, Azarovi, Lobjanidze (Chabradze 81), Okriashvili (Volkovi 70), Kvaratskhelia (Qazaishvili 80), Tsitaishvili (Davitashvili 70).
Sweden: Olsen – Krafth, Nilsson, Lindelof, Augustinsson, K. Olsson, Svanberg (Quaison 78), Forsberg, Claesson (Kulusevski 74), Ibrahimovic, Isak (Karlsson 87).

Nov 11 – Athens
Greece 0
Spain 1 (Sarabia 26 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)
Greece: Vlachodimos – Tzavellas, Tsimikas, Goutas, Giannoulis (Limnios 67), Androutsos, Bouchalakis (Pelkas 78), Siopis, Mantalos, Masouras (Tzolis 46), Pavlidis (Douvikas 46).
Spain: Simon – Carvajal, Martinez (Azpilicueta 89), Laporte, Gaya, Rodri, Gavi (Busquets 65), Koke, Morata (Fornals 65), De Tomas (Rodrigo 57), Sarabia (Olmo 57).

Nov 14 – Athens
Greece 1 (Masouras 44)
Kosovo 1 (Rrahmani 76)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Blr)
Greece: Vlachodimos – Goutas, Tzavellas (Pavlidis 80), Hatzidiakos, Mantalos, Pelkas (Vrousai 80), Bouchalakis, Tsimikas, Androutsos, Douvikas (Tzolis 66), Masouras (Limnios 86).
Kosovo: Muric – Fazliji, Rrahmani, Aliti, Vojvoda, Loshaj (Zhegrova 46), Shala (Halimi 70), Berisha, Idrizi (Kastrati 86), Rashica (Seljmani 80), Muriqi.

Nov 14 – Seville
Spain 1 (Morata 86)
Sweden 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Spain: Simon – Azpilicueta, Laporte, P. Torres, Alba, Busquets, Soler (Merino 73), Gavi (Rodri 89), De Tomas (Rodrigo 60), Olmo (Mendez 89), Sarabia (Morata 59).
Sweden: Olsen – Krafth (M. Olsson 85), Nilsson, Lindelof, Augustinsson, Ekdal, K. Olsson, Forsberg (Svanberg 63), Claesson, Isak (Ibrahimovic 73), Kulusevski (Quaison 85).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain (Q)	8	6	1	1	15	5	19
Sweden (P)	8	5	0	3	12	6	15
Greece	8	2	4	2	8	8	10
Georgia	8	2	1	5	6	12	7
Kosovo	8	1	2	5	5	15	5

Group C

Nov 12 – Rome
Italy 1 (Di Lorenzo 36)
Switzerland 1 (Widmer 11)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Bonucci, Acerbi, Emerson (Calabria 80), Jorginho, Barella (Cristante 69), Locatelli (Tonali 58), Belotti (Berardi 58), Insigne (Raspadori 79), Chiesa.
Switzerland: Sommer – Akanji, Schar, Rodriguez (Garcia 68), Widmer, Shaqiri (Sow 80), Freuler, Zakaria, Okafor (Frei 79), Vargas (Zeqiri 87), Steffen (Imeri 69).

Nov 12 – Belfast
Northern Ireland 1 (Satkus 18 og)
Lithuania 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – McNair, J. Evans, Cathcart, Dallas, Saville (C. Evans 70), McCann, Davis, Ferguson (Lewis 70), Washington (Jones 88), Magennis (Taylor 78).
Lithuania: Setkus – Vaitkunas, Satkus, Dapkus (Gaspuitis 75), Barauskas, Cernych, Megelaitis (Armanavicius 86), Lasickas, Verbickas (Simkus 86), Novikovas, Laukzemis (Kazlauskas 80).

Nov 15 – Belfast
Northern Ireland 0
Italy 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kovacs (Rou)
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – Flanagan, J. Evans, Cathcart, Lewis, Dallas, Davis, Saville (C. Evans 72), McCann, Magennis, Whyte (Washington 72).
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Bonucci, Acerbi, Emerson (Scamacca 80), Jorginho (Locatelli 68), Barella (Belotti 64), Tonali (Cristante 46), Insigne (Bernardeschi 68), Chiesa, Berardi.

Nov 15 – Luzern
Switzerland 4 (Okafor 48, Vargas 57, Itten 72, Freuler 90+1)
Bulgaria 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)
Switzerland: Sommer – Frei, Schar (Sow 90+7), Widmer, Mbabu, Shaqiri (Aebischer 90+7), Zakaria, Freuler, Gavranovic (Itten 68), Vargas (Zeqiri 79), Okafor (Steffen 68).
Bulgaria: Karadzhov – Hristov, Dimitrov, Cvetanov, Turitsov (Velkovski 46), Chochev (I. Iliev 65), Kostadinov, Kirilov (Tsonev 70), Nedelev, Despodov (Yankov 80), A. Iliev (Minchev 46).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland (Q)	8	5	3	0	15	2	18
Italy (P)	8	4	4	0	13	2	16
N. Ireland	8	2	3	3	6	7	9
Bulgaria	8	2	2	4	6	14	8
Lithuania	8	1	0	7	4	19	3

Group D

Nov 13 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 1 (Menalo 69)
Finland 3 (Forss 29, Lod 51, O'Shaughnessy 73)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Sehic – Civic, Sanicanin, Kolasinac (Demirovic 39), Ahmedhodzic, Pjanic (Susic 66), Cimirot (Gojak 56), Hadziahmetovic (Prcic 56), Prevljak, Krunic (Menalo 67), Stevanovic.
Finland: Hradecky – Ivanov (Arajuuri 80), Vaisanen, O'Shaughnessy, Hamalainen, Raitala, Schuller, Kamara, Lod (Uronen 76), Pukki (Jensen 80), Forss (Nissila 46). *Sent off: Raitala 37.*

Nov 13 – Paris
France 8 (Mbappe 6, 12, 32, 87, Benzema 55, 59, Rabiot 75, Griezmann 84 pen)
Kazakhstan 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Nyberg (Swe)
France: Lloris – Kounde, Upamecano, L. Hernandez (Lenglet 80), Rabiot, Kante (Tchouameni 72), T. Hernandez, Coman (Pavard 79), Griezmann, Mbappe (Ben Yedder 88), Benzema (Diaby 71).
Kazakhstan: Pokatilov – Marochkin, Alip, Erlanov, Taykenov, Bystrov (Kairov 84), Kuat, Zharynbetov, Tapalov (Baytana 68), Aimbetov (Zhaksylykov 59), Omirtayev (Vassiljev 60).

Nov 16 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 0
Ukraine 2 (Zinchenko 59, Dovbyk 79)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Vasiljev – Hadzikadunic, Kovacevic, Susic, Ahmedhodzic, Prcic (Krunic 64), Gojak (Cimirot 64), Stevanovic, Hadziahmetovic (Nalic 71), Menalo (Prevljak 71), Demirovic (Kodro 80).
Ukraine: Bushchan – Matviyenko, Zabarnyi, Sobol (Shaparenko 64), Tymchyk, Stepanenko, Zinchenko, Tsygankov (Zubkov 75), Malinovskyi (Sydorchuk 81), Yaremchuk (Dovbyk 74), Yarmolenko (Karavaev 82).

Nov 16 – Helsinki
Finland 0
France 2 (Benzema 66, Mbappe 76)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Guida (Ita)
Finland: Hradecky – Ivanov, O'Shaughnessy (Pohjanpalo 82), Vaisanen, Hamalainen, Uronen (Taylor 73), Schuller (Forss 64), Nissila (Valakari 82), Kamara, Lod, Pukki.
France: Lloris – Kounde (Coman 57), Zouma, Upamecano, Dubois (Pavard 46), Digne, Tchouameni, Rabiot (Veretout 86), Griezmann (Guendouzi 67), Mbappe, Diaby (Benzema 56).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France (Q)	8	5	3	0	18	3	18
Ukraine (P)	8	2	6	0	11	8	12
Finland	8	3	2	3	10	10	11
Bosnia & Herz.	8	1	4	3	9	12	7
Kazakhstan	8	0	3	5	5	20	3

Group E

Nov 13 – Brussels
Belgium 3 (Benteke 11, Carrasco 53, T. Hazard 74)
Estonia 1 (Sorga 70)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Meler (Tur)
Belgium: Courtois – Denayer, Vertonghen, Castagne, Meunier (Saelemaekers 63), Witsel, De Bruyne (De Ketelaere 83), Carrasco (Mertens 71), Vanaken, E. Hazard (T. Hazard 62), Benteke (Origi 84).
Estonia: Igonen – Tamm, Mets, Paskotsi, Vassiljev (Soomets 80), Poom, Kreida, Ojamaa (Sinyavskiy 60), Teniste (Puri 79), Anier (Sappinen 59), Zenjov (Sorga 67).

Nov 13 – Cardiff
Wales 5 (Ramsey 3, 50 pen, N. Williams 20, B. Davies 77, C. Roberts 89)
Belarus 1 (Kontsevoy 87)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Mariani (Ita)
Wales: Ward (Hennessey 90+1) – Ampadu, Rodon, B. Davies, C. Roberts, N. Williams, Allen, Ramsey (Morrell 71), Wilson, James (T. Roberts 76), Bale (Johnson 46).
Belarus: Chernik – Naumov, Selyava, Yudenkov (Kontsevoy 82), Shvetsov, Klimovich (Ebong 70), Yablonski, Pechenin, Zolotov (Uzepchuk 71), Lisakovic (Bakhar 81), Sedko (Antilevski 60).

Nov 16 – Prague
Czech Republic 2 (Brabec 59, Sykora 85)
Estonia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Grinfeeld (Isr)
Czech Republic: Vaclik – Brabec, Zima, Novak, Coufal, Barak, Sadilek (Pavelka 69), Kral (Kuchta 60), Vydra (Kopic 69), Pesek (Sykora 28), Masopust (Krmencik 60).
Estonia: Igonen – Tamm, Mets, Kussk, Sinyavskiy (Ojamaa 61), Paskotsi (Kirss 87), Kreida, Poom, Vassiljev, Sorga (Anier 61), Sappinen (Zenjov 76).

Nov 16 – Cardiff
Wales 1 (Moore 32)
Belgium 1 (De Bruyne 12)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Dias (Por)
Wales: Ward – Mepham, Rodon, B. Davies, C. Roberts, N. Williams, Allen, Morrell, Ramsey (Johnson 90+3), James, Moore.
Belgium: Casteels – Boyata, Theate (Vertonghen 85), Castagne (Dendoncker 58), Meunier (Trossard 85), Vanaken, Witsel, De Bruyne, T. Hazard, De Ketelaere (Saelemaekers 58), Origi (Vanzeir 59).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belgium (Q)	8	6	2	0	25	6	20
Wales (P)	8	4	3	1	14	9	15
Czech Rep (P)	8	4	2	2	14	9	14
Estonia	8	1	1	6	9	21	4
Belarus	8	1	0	7	7	24	3

Group F

Nov 12 – Chisinau
Moldova 0
Scotland 2 (Patterson 38, Adams 65)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Srb)
Moldova: Namasco – Posmac, Bolohan (Razgoniuc 62), Jardan, Ionita, Rata, Dros (Bogaciuc 61), Marandici (Iosipoi 71), Calin, Ginsari (Cojocaru 61), Nicolaescu (Puntus 71).
Scotland: Gordon – Hendry, Cooper, Tierney, Patterson, McGregor, Gilmour (McLean 85), Robertson, Armstrong (Nisbet 76), McGinn (Turnbull 90), Adams (Brown 85).

Nov 12 – Klagenfurt
Austria 4 (Arnautovic 51 pen, Schaub 62, 72, Sabitzer 84
Israel 2 (Bitton 33, Peretz 59)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hategan (Rou)
Austria: Bachmann – Trimmel, Hinteregger (Dragovic 90+3), Lienhart, Alaba, Sabitzer, Grillitsch, Seiwald, Grull (Ulmer 90), Schopf (Schaub 58), Arnautovic (Adamu 89).
Israel: Marciano – Bitton, Elhamed, Abu Abaid (Abu Fani 82), Natcho (Gandelman 23), Peretz, Menachem, Dasa, Zahavi (Weissman 65), Solomon, Dabbur (Abada 82).

Nov 12 – Copenhagen
Denmark 3 (Skov Olsen 18, Bruun Larsen 63, Maehle 90+3)
Faroe Islands 1 (K. Olsen 89)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Petrescu (Rou)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Stryger Larsen, Kjaer, Christensen, Lindstrom (Delaney 57), Norgaard (Jonsson 80), Maehle, Wass, Poulsen (Dreyer 68), Daramy (Bruun Larsen 57), Skov Olsen (Cornelius 67).
Faroe Islands: Gestsson – Askham, Nattestad, Faero, Davidsen, Joensen (Mohr 81), Andreasen, G. Vatnhamar (Jensen 67), S. Vatnhamar (Knudsen 80), Hansson, Edmundsson (Olsen 55).

Nov 15 – Klagenfurt
Austria 4 (Arnautovic 4, 55 pen, Trimmel 22, Ljubicic 83)
Moldova 1 (Nicolaescu 60)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Stavrev (Mkd)
Austria: Lindner – Trimmel, Dragovic (Posch 82), Lienhart, Ulmer, Sabitzer, Grillitsch (Ljubicic 58), Seiwald (Ilsanker 72), Grull (Kara 81), Schaub (Onisiwo 58), Arnautovic.
Moldova: Namasco – Posmac, Bolohan (Iovu 88), Razgoniuc (Iosipoi 46), Revenco, Jardan, Dros, Cociuc (Ginsari 59) Ionita, Spataru (Cojocaru 84), Puntus (Nicolaescu 58).

Nov 15 – Netanya
Israel 3 (Dabbur 30 pen, Weissman 58, Peretz 74)
Faroe Islands 2 (S. Vatnhamar 62, K. Olsen 72)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brisard (Fra)

Israel: Marciano – Bitton, Elhamed, Dgani (Tibi 76), Peretz, Avraham (Hazizia 75), Dasa, Solomon, Podgoreanu, Dabbur (Abada 81), Weissman.
Faroe Islands: Nielsen – Askham, Nattestad (Mohr 71), Faero, Davidsen, Joensen, Hendriksson Olsen, Andreasen (Jensen 70), S. Vatnhamar (Knudsen 80), Hansson (K .Olsen 52), Edmundsson (Bjartalid 80).

Nov 15 – Glasgow
Scotland 2 (Souttar 35, Adams 86)
Denmark 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hernandez (Spa)
Scotland: Gordon – Souttar, Cooper, Tierney (Ralston 88), O'Donnell, McGregor, Gilmour (McLean 74), Robertson (McKenna 79), Christie (Armstrong 80), McGinn, Adams.
Denmark: Schmeichel – Kjaer, Vestergaard, Christensen, Wass (Dreyer 81), Jonsson (Stage 56), Kristensen (Bah 81), Maehle, Bruun Larsen (Sisto 56), Skov Olsen, Cornelius (Uhre 72).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Denmark (Q)	10	9	0	1	30	3	27
Scotland (P)	10	7	2	1	17	7	23
Israel	10	5	1	4	23	21	16
Austria (P)	10	5	1	4	19	17	16
Faroe Islands	10	1	1	8	7	23	4
Moldova	10	0	1	9	5	30	1

Group G

Nov 13 – Oslo
Norway 0
Latvia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Visser (Bel)
Norway: Nyland – Lode, Strandberg, Meling, Pedersen, Thorstvedt (Solbakken 82), Normann, Thorsby (King 46), Elyounoussi, Odegaard, Sorloth.
Latvia: Ozols – Dubra, Cernomordijs, Jurkovskis, Savalnieks, Uldrikis (Tarasovs 75), Kigurs (Karklins 89), Emsis, Gutkovskis (Krollis 89), Ciganiks, Jaunzems (Kamess 59).

Nov 13 – Istanbul
Turkey 6 (Akturkoglu 11, Dervisoglu 38, 41, Demiral 65, Dursun 81, Muldur 84)
Gibraltar 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Boiko (Ukr)
Turkey: Cakir – Celik (Muldur 46), Soyuncu, Demiral, Erkin (R. Yilmaz 46), Calhanoglu (Kutlu 82), Kokcu, Dervisoglu (Karaman 69), Burak Yilmaz (Dursun 69), Akturkoglu, Baris Alper Yilmaz.
Gibraltar: Coleing – Wiseman, R. Chipolina, Olivero, Mouelhi, Sergeant (Barnett), Annesley, Jolley (J. Chipolina 46), Valarino (Casciaro 46), Walker (Badr 59), De Barr (Styche 59). *Sent off: Oliver 22.*

Nov 13 – Podgorica
Montenegro 2 (Vukotic 82, Vujnovic 86)
Netherlands 2 (Depay 25 pen, 54)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)
Montenegro: Sarkic – Savic, Vujacic, Tomasevic (Raickovic 80), Radunovic, Vukcevic, Osmajic, Haksabanovic (Vukotic 69), Jankovic (Bozovic 69), Jovovic (Vujnovic 62), Djurdjevic (Beciraj 62).
Netherlands: Bijlow – Dumfries, Van Dijk, De Vrij (De Ligt 90), Blind, De Jong (Gravenberch 78), Klaassen, Wijnaldum (Koopmeiners 66), Depay, Danjuma (Lang 78), Malen (Bergwijn 46).

Nov 16 – Gibraltar
Gibraltar 1 (Walker 7)
Latvia 3 (Gutkovskis 25, Uldrikis 55, Krollis 75)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Eskas (Nor)
Gibraltar: Coleing – Wiseman, Mouelhi, Britto, R. Chipolina, Sergeant, Annesley (Ronan 67), Valarino (Styche 76), Torrilla, Walker, De Barr (Casciaro 45).
Latvia: Ozols – Dubra, Cernomordijs, Jurkovskis, Savalnieks, Kigurs (Krollis 69), Tarasovs, Ciganiks (Varslavans 90), Jaunzems (Kamess 46), Uldrikis (Karklins 69), Gutkovskis.

Nov 16 – Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Beciraj 4)
Turkey 2 (Akturkoglu 22, Kokcu 60)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Daniel Siebert (Ger)
Montenegro: Sarkic – Vesovic, Vujacic, Savic (Simic 57), Tomasevic, Radunovic, Jovovic (Bozovic 67), Jankovic (Raickovic 74), Haksabanovic (Vukotic 57), Osmajic, Beciraj (Vujnovic 66).
Turkey: Cakir – Celik (Ayhan 90+1), Soyuncu, Demiral, Erkin, Calhanoglu, Ozdemir (Kokcu 46), Akturkoglu (Baris Alper Yılmaz 79), Omur (Kutlu 79), Dervisoglu (Karaman 69), Burak Yilmaz.

Nov 16 – Rotterdam
Netherlands 2 (Bergwijn 84, Depay 90+1)
Norway 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
Netherlands: Cillessen – Dumfries, Van Dijk, De Ligt, Blind, De Jong, Klaassen (De Roon 74), Wijnaldum, Depay, Danjuma (Ake 89), Bergwijn.
Norway: Nyland – Hanche-Olsen, Strandberg, Meling, Pedersen (Olsen 87), Normann (Gregersen 74), Thorsby (Thorstvedt 46), Odegaard, Solbakken (Hauge 46, King 74), Elyounoussi, Sorloth.

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netherlands (Q)	10	7	2	1	33	8	23
Turkey (P)	10	6	3	1	27	16	21
Norway	10	5	3	2	15	8	18
Montenegro	10	3	3	4	14	15	12
Latvia	10	2	3	5	11	14	9
Gibraltar	10	0	0	10	4	43	0

Group H

Nov 11 – Saint-Petersburg
Russia 6 (Erokhin 4, 87, Smolov 55, Mostovoy 56, Sutormin 62, Zabolotny 82)
Cyprus 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Stefanski (Pol)
Russia: Safonov – Sutormin, Osipenko, Diveev (Chistyakov 67), Terekhov, Fomin (Glebov 67), Golovin (Zobnin 57), Erokhin, Smolov (Zabolotny 57), Mostovoy (Ionov 72), Al. Miranchuk.
Cyprus: D. Demetriou, Soteriou, Laifis, Karo, Kastanos (Antoniades 83), Artymatas, Ioannou, Psaltis (M. Demetriou 46), Soteriou (Kakoulis 74), Papoulis (Spoljaric 83), Tzionis (Mamas 68).

Nov 11 – Ta' Qali
Malta 1 (Brozovic 31 og)
Croatia 7 (Perisic 6, Caleta-Car 22, Pasalic 39, Modric 45+1, Majer 47, 64, Kramaric 53)
HT: 1-4. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)
Malta: Bonello – Agius, Pepe, Shaw (Micallef 83), Teuma (Guillaumier 63), Kristensen (Pisani 46), Camenzuli, Attard, Degabriele, J. Mbong (Dimech 69), Montebello (Satariano 62).
Croatia: Grbic – Juranovic, Gvardiol, Caleta-Car, Sosa, Brozovic (Jakic 46), Modric (Vlasic 54), Pasalic (Livaja 62), Majer, Perisic (Orsic 54), Kramaric (Petkovic 54).

Nov 11 – Trnava
Slovakia 2 (Duda 58, Strelec 74)
Slovenia 2 (Zajc 18, Mevlja 62)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)
Slovakia: Rodak – Pekarik (Bozenik 88), Skriniar, Satka, Lobotka, Holubek, Hamsik (Duda 46), Bero (Strelec 71), Haraslin (Jirka 65), Mak (Suslov 71), Almasi.
Slovenia: Oblak – Mevlja, Blazic, Balkovec, Stojanovic, Zajc (Vrhovec 71), Stulac, Lovric, Sporar, Verbic, (Karnicnik 59), Ilicic (Rogelj 85). *Sent off: Blazic 57.*

Nov 14 – Split
Croatia 1 (Kudryashov 81 og)
Russia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Makkelie (Ned)
Croatia: Grbic – Juranovic (Brekalo 75), Gvardiol, Lovren, Sosa, Brozovic, Modric, Pasalic (Livaja 75), Kramaric (Stanisic 86), Perisic, Vlasic (Petkovic 58).
Russia: Safonov – Dzhikiya, Diveev, Kudryashov, Karavaev, Barinov, Golovin (Chistyakov 57), Fomin (Glebov 80), Smolov (Zabolotny 57), Bakaev (Mostovoy 78), Ionov (Zobnin 57).

Nov 14 – Ta' Qali
Malta 0
Slovakia 6 (Rusnak 6, 16, Duda 8, 69, 80, De Marco 72)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Jovic (Cro)
Malta: Bonello – Shaw, Borg (Micallef 78), Muscat, Teuma, Guillaumier (Dimech 85), Camenzuli, Attard, Satariano (Montebello 55), J. Mbong (Carauna 85), P. Mbong (Kristensen 55). *Sent off: Camenzuli 46, Teuma 50.*
Slovakia: Dubravka – Skriniar, Satka, Lobotka (Hromada 71), Hancko (De Marco 70), Koscelnik (Bozenik 77), Duda, Rusnak, Haraslin (Mak 61), Suslov, Strelec (Almasi 62).

Nov 14 – Ljubljana
Slovenia 2 (Zajc 48, Cerin 84)
Cyprus 1 (Kakoulli 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Slovenia: Oblak – Bijol, Karnicnik, Balkovec, Stojanovic, Zajc (Stulac 84), Kurtic, Cerin, Celar (Vrhovec 90+4), Verbic (Lovric 31), Ilicic.
Cyprus: Michael – Laifis, Antoniades, Andreou, Kastanos, Artymatas, Avraam (Spoljaric 90+2), Demetriou, Soteriou, Tzionis (Efrem 74), Papoulis (Kakoulis 81).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia (Q)	10	7	2	1	21	4	23
Russia (P)	10	7	1	2	19	6	22
Slovakia	10	3	5	2	17	10	14
Slovenia	10	4	2	4	13	12	14
Cyprus	10	1	2	7	4	21	5
Malta	10	1	2	7	9	30	5

Group I

Nov 12 – London
England 5 (Maguire 9, Kane 18, 33, 45+2, Henderson 28)
Albania 0
HT: 5-0. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)
England: Pickford – Walker, Stones, Maguire, James (Alexander-Arnold 77), Phillips (Bellingham 64), Henderson, Chilwell, Sterling (Smith Rowe 77), Foden (Grealish 63), Kane (Abraham 63).
Albania: Strakosha – Kumbulla (Dermaku 17), Veseli, Ismajli, Bare (Laci 12), Gjasula, Trashi (Mihaj 46), Hysaj, Cikalleshi, Bajrami (Ramadani 46), Uzuni (Roshi 86).

Nov 12 – Budapest
Hungary 4 (Szoboszlai 6, 83, Gazdag 22, Vecsei 88)
San Marino 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Glova (Svk)
Hungary: Dibusz – Lang, At. Szalai, Botka (Balogh 85), Vecsei, A. Nagy (Schafer 57), Schon (K. Varga 57), Nego, Ad. Szalai, Szoboszlai (Hahn 85), Gazdag (Kiss 73).
San Marino: Benedettini, Rossi (Zonzini 71), Fabbri, Grandoni (A Golinucci 60), Battistini, E. Golinucci, Lunadei, Tomassini, (Hirsch 36), Mularoni, Nanni (Vitaioli 60), Tomassini (D'Addario 60).

Nov 12 – Andorra la Vella
Andorra 1 (Vales 45)
Poland 4 (Lewandowski 5, 73, Jozwiak 11, Milik 45+2)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Beaton (Sco)
Andorra: Alvarez – M. San Nicolas (De Pablos 84), Llovera, Vales (C. Garcia 66), Alavedra, Cervos, Clemente (A. Martinez 66), M. Vieira, Pujol (Rosas 62), Alaez (M. Garcia 84), Cucu. *Sent off: Cucu 1.*
Poland: Szczesny – Bereszynski, Glik, Rybus, Jozwiak, Krychowiak (Linetty 64), Zielinski (D. Szymanski 86), Frankowski (Cash 63), Klich (Piatek 64), Milik (Swiderski 77), Lewandowski.

Nov 15 – Tirana
Albania 1 (Cekici 73)
Andorra 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lva)
Albania: Strakosha – Dermaku, Hoxhallari (Lenjani 90), Mihaj, Cekici, Laci, Hysaj, Ramadani (Bajrami 56), Roshi, Seferi (Muci 56), Uzuni.
Andorra: Gomes – C. Garcia, Alavedra (Rodrigues 85), Llovera, Cervos, M. San Nicolas, M. Vieira (Moreno 85), Pujol (X. Vieira 85), C. Martinez (M. Garcia 63), Alaez, Rosas (A. Martinez 74).

Nov 15 – Serravalle
San Marino 0
England 10 (Maguire 6, Fabbri 15 og, Kane 27 pen, 32, 39 pen, 42, Smith Rowe 58, Mings 69, Abraham 78, Saka 79)
HT: 0-6. **Ref:** Obrenovic (Svn)
San Marino: Benedettini – Fabbri (Conti 81), Rossi, Battistini, Mularoni, Lunadei (Grandoni 74), Golinucci, D'Addario (Censoni 46), Tomassini (Vitaioli 46), Hirsch (Golinucci 46), Nanni. *Sent off: Rossi 67.*
England: Ramsdale – Coady, Maguire (Chilwell 46), Mings, Alexander-Arnold, Phillips (Gallagher 46), Bellingham, Saka, Smith Rowe (Stones 73), Foden (Abraham 46), Kane (James 63).

Nov 15 – Warsaw
Poland 1 (Swiderski 61)
Hungary 2 (Schafer 37, Gazdag 80)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tiago Martins (Por)
Poland: Szczesny – Dawidowicz, Bednarek, Kedziora, Cash (Jozwiak 46), Linetty (Frankowski 65), Klich, Moder (Zielinski 46), Puchacz (Placheta 83), Piatek (Milik 65), Swiderski.
Hungary: Dibusz – Fiola, Lang, At. Szalai, Nego, A. Nagy (Vecsei 90), Schafer, Z. Nagy, K. Varga (Gazdag 58), Ad. Szalai (Hahn 89), Schon (Kiss 72).

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England (Q)	10	8	2	0	39	3	26
Poland (P)	10	6	2	2	30	11	20
Albania	10	6	0	4	12	12	18
Hungary	10	5	2	3	19	13	17
Andorra	10	2	0	8	8	24	6
San Marino	10	0	0	10	1	46	0

Group J

Nov 11 – Wolfsburg
Germany 9 (Gundogan 11 pen, Kaufmann 20 og, Sane 22, 49, Reus 23, Muller 76, 86, Baku 80, Goppel 89 og)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 4-0. **Ref:** Martincic (Cro)
Germany: Neuer – Hofmann (Nmecha 46), Rudiger, Kehrer (Ginter 72), Gunter, Gundogan (Arnold 64), Goretzka (Neuhaus 46), Reus, Sane (Volland 64), Baku, Muller.
Liechtenstein: B. Buchel – Kaufmann, Hofer, Malin, Goppel, S. Wolfinger (Brandle 83), Hasler, Frommelt, Sele (M. Buchel 84), Y. Frick (F. Wolfinger 29, Meier 69), Salanovic (Grunenfelder 69). *Sent off: Hofer 9.*

Nov 11 – Bucharest
Romania 0
Iceland 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Romania: Nita – Nedelcearu, Chiriches, Tosca (Bancu 68), Ratiu, Marin, Stanciu (Morutan 68), Cicaldau (Puscas 86), Alibec (Ivan 68), Tanase (Maxim 7), Hagi.
Iceland: E. Olafsson – Gretarsson, Skulason (Thorarinsson 15), Br. Bjarnason, Sampsted, Bi. Bjarnason, Johannesson (Thrandarson 90+1), Thordarson (Helgason 74), S. Gudjohnsen (A. Gudjohnsen 74), Thorsteinsson, Gudmundsson (Ellertsson 90).

Nov 11 – Yerevan
Armenia 0
North Macedonia 5 (Trajkovski 22, Bardi 36, 67 pen, 90 pen, M. Ristovski 79)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Maria Sanchez (Spa)
Armenia: Yurchenko – Calisir, Hambardzumyan, Hovhannisyan (Margaryan 46), Terteryan, Zelarayan (Bichakhchyan 77), Vardanyan (A. Grigoryan 46), Udo, Briasco (Geloyan 73), Mkhitaryan, Barseghyan (N. Grigoryan 73).
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Musliu, Velkoski, Kostadinov (Atanasov 83), Alioski, Askovski (Todoroski 83), Bardhi, Elmas (Miovski 83), Trajkovski (Spirovski 64), Churlinov (Ristevski 77), M. Ristovski.

Nov 14 – Yerevan
Armenia 1 (Mkhitaryan 59 pen)
Germany 4 (Havertz 15, Gundogan 45+4 pen, 50, Hofmann 64)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Letexier (Fra)
Armenia: Buchnev – Voskanyan, Calisir, Haroyan, Margaryan, Terteryan, Spertsyan, Bayramyan (Zelarayan 69), Udo (A. Grigoryan 84), Mkhitaryan (N. Grigoryan 76), Adamyan (Briasco 69).
Germany: Ter Stegen – Ginter, Tah, Kehrer, Gundogan (Arnold 60), Neuhaus (Volland 73), Raum, JHofmann (Baku 84), Havertz, Sane (Brandt 60), Muller (Nmecha 60).

Nov 14 – Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Romania 2 (Man 8, Bancu 87)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jug (Svn)
Liechtenstein: B. Buchel – Frommelt, Goppel, Grunenfelder, Spirig, S. Wolfinger (Yildiz 82), Sele (M. Buchel 82), Hasler, Meier (Kaufmann 71), Y. Frick (F. Wolfinger 71), N. Frick (Kardesoglu 63).
Romania: Nita – Burca, Rus, Bancu, Manea, Nedelcu, Stanciu (Maxim 63), Morutan (Cicaldau 73), Puscas (Alibec 63), Ivan (Sali 82), Man (Hagi 74).

Nov 14 – Skopje
North Macedonia 3 (Alioski 7, Elmas 65, 86)
Iceland 1 (Thorsteinsson 54)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Massa (Ita)
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – S. Ristovski (Zajkov 89), Velkoski, Musliu, Alioski, Kostadinov, Elmas, Bardhi, M. Ristovski (Miovski 78), Churlinov (Askovski 63), Trajkovski (Spirovski 78),
Iceland: E. Olafsson – Saevarsson, Gretarsson, Br. Bjarnason, Thorarinsson (Thrandarson 86), Bi. Bjarnason, Johannesson, Thordarson (Helgason 72), Thorsteinsson (Traustason 78), Gudmundsson (Ellertsson 86) S. Gudjohnsen (A. Gudjohnsen 72). *Sent off: Johanesson 79.*

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany (Q)	10	9	0	1	36	4	27
N. Macedonia (P)	10	5	3	2	23	11	18
Romania	10	5	2	3	13	8	17
Armenia	10	3	3	4	9	20	12
Iceland	10	2	3	5	12	18	9
Liechtenstein	10	0	1	9	2	34	1

ASIA Section

● *4.5 finals places available*

Third Round

Group A

Nov 11 – Goyang
South Korea 1 (Hwang Hee-Chan 36 pen)
United Arab Emirates 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ma Ning (Chn)

Nov 11 – Sidon
Lebanon 1 (Saad 37)
Iran 2 (Azmoun 90+1, Nourollahi 90+5)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)

Nov 11 – Doha
Iraq 1 (Al Ammari 86 pen)
Syria 1 (Al Somah 79)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhr)

Nov 16 – Doha
Iraq 0
South Korea 3 (Lee Jae-Sung 33, Son Heung-Min 74 pen, Jeong Woo-Yeong 80)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tantashev (Uzb)

Nov 16 – Amman
Syria 0
Iran 3 (Azmoun 33, Hajsafi 42 pen, Gholizadeh 89)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Ma Ning (Chn)

Nov 16 – Sidon
Lebanon 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mabkhout 85 pen)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Evans (Aus)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	6	5	1	0	11	2	16
South Korea	6	4	2	0	8	2	14
UAE	6	1	3	2	4	5	6
Lebanon	6	1	2	3	4	6	5
Iraq	6	0	4	2	3	9	4
Syria	6	0	2	4	5	11	2

Group B

Nov 11 – Sydney
Australia 0
Saudi Arabia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ko Hyung-Jin (Kor)

Nov 11 – Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Japan 1 (Ito 17)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mohamed (UAE)

Nov 11 – Sharjah
China 1 (Wu Lei 21)
Oman 1 (Al Harthi 75)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pu-udom (Tha)

Nov 16 – Sharjah
China 1 (Wu Lei 71 pen)
Oman 1 (Duke 38)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Makhadmeh (Jor)

Nov 16 – Muscat
Oman
Japan 1 (Ito 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ko Hyung-Jin (Kor)

Nov 16 – Hanoi
Vietnam 0
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Shehri 31)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Evans (Aus)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	6	5	1	0	9	3	16
Japan	6	4	0	2	5	3	12
Australia	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
Oman	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
China	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Vietnam	6	0	0	6	4	12	0

AFRICA Section

● *5 finals places available*

Second Round

Group A

Nov 12 – Marrakesh
Burkina Faso 1 (Dayo 55 pen)
Niger 1 (Oumarou 34 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Guezzaz (Mar)

Nov 12 – Cairo
Djibouti 0
Algeria 4 (Belaili 29, Benrahma 40, Feghouli 42, Slimani 87)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Houngnandande (Ben)

Nov 15 – Niamey
Niger 7 (Adebayor 14, 26, 75, Wonkoye 62, Sosah 64, Djibrilla 85, 87)
Djibouti 2 (Ahmed 33, Siad Isman 84)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Athoumani (Com)

Nov 16 – Blida
Algeria 2 (Mahrez 21, Feghouli 68)
Burkina Faso 2 (Sanogo 37, Dayo 84 pen)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Gomes (Saf)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria (P)	6	4	2	0	25	4	14
Burkina Faso	6	3	3	0	12	4	12
Niger	6	2	1	3	13	17	7
Djibouti	6	0	0	6	4	29	0

Group B

Nov 13 – Lusaka
Zambia 4 (Daka 34, F. Sakala 37, 45+1, 63)
Mauritania 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Ismail (Sud)

Nov 13 – Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Ganet 84)
Tunisia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Traore (Mli)

Nov 16 – Tunis
Tunisia 3 (Laidouni 18, Drager 31, Maaloul 43)
Zambia 1 (F. Sakala 80)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Ndabihawenimana (Bur)

Nov 16 – Nouakchott
Mauritania 1 (Kamara 22)
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Coco 59)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Heeralall (Mri)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia (P)	6	4	1	1	11	2	13
Equatorial Guinea	6	3	2	1	6	5	11
Zambia	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Mauritania	6	0	2	4	2	11	2

Group C

Nov 13 – Tangier
Liberia 0
Nigeria 2 (Osimhen 15 pen, Musa 90+4 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Essrayri (Tun)

Nov 13 – Mindelo
Cape Verde 2 (J. Tavares 51, Stopira 75)
Central African Republic 1 (Ngoma 11)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Laryea (Gha)

Nov 16 – Lagos
Nigeria 1 (Osimhen 1)
Cape Verde 1 (Stopira 5)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ghorbal (Alg)

Nov 16 – Tangier
Liberia 3 (Macauley 2, Wilson 8, 74)
Central African Republic 1 (Ngoma 61)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Traore (Civ)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria (P)	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Cape Verde	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Liberia	6	2	0	4	5	8	6
Central African Rep.	6	1	1	4	4	9	4

Group D

Nov 13 – Johannesburg
Malawi 0
Cameroon 4 (Aboubakar 22 pen, Zambo Anguissa 42, Bassogog 85, 87)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Sy (Sen)

Nov 13 – Cotonou
Ivory Coast 3 (Gradel 10, Cornet 61, Seri 90)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** El Ghandour (Egy)

Nov 16 – Cotonou
Mozambique 1 (Mzava 51 og)
Malawi 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hagi (Som)

Nov 16 – Douala
Cameroon 1 (Toko Ekambi 21)
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zim)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon (P)	6	5	0	1	12	3	15
Ivory Coast	6	4	1	1	10	3	13
Mozambique	6	1	1	4	2	8	4
Malawi	6	1	0	5	2	12	3

Group E

Nov 11 – Entebbe
Uganda 1 (Bayo 89)
Kenya 1 (Olunga 62)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Djama (Dji)

Nov 11 – Kigali
Rwanda 0
Mali 3 (Djenepo 19, Kone 21, K. Coulibaly 87)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Carvalho (Ang)

Nov 14 – Agadir
Mali 1 (K. Coulibaly 19)
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Weyesa (Eth)

Nov 15 – Nairobi
Kenya 2 (Olunga 2, Odada 15 pen)
Rwanda 1 (Niyonzima 66)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Alvacao (Moz)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali (P)	6	5	1	0	11	0	16
Uganda	6	2	3	1	3	2	9
Kenya	6	1	3	2	4	9	6
Rwanda	6	0	1	5	2	9	1

Group F

Nov 12 – Franceville
Gabon 1 (Aubameyang 54 pen)
Libya 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ssali (Uga)

Nov 12 – Luanda
Angola 2 (Costa 25, Nzola 35 pen)
Egypt 2 (Elneny 45+1, Tawfik 59)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ngambi (Cod)

Nov 16 – Alexandria
Egypt 2 (Magdy 4 pen, Obiang 75 og)
Gabon 1 (Allevinah 54)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gatogato (Bur)

Nov 16 – Benghazi
Libya 1 (Al Warfali 49 pen)
Angola 1 (Zini 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Dahane (Mtn)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt (P)	6	4	2	0	10	4	14
Gabon	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Libya	6	2	1	3	4	7	7
Angola	6	1	2	3	6	8	5

Group G

Nov 11 – Johannesburg
Ethiopia 1 (Kebede 72)
Ghana 1 (A. Ayew 22)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ngwa (Cmr)

Nov 11 – Johannesburg
South Africa 1 (Mokoena 26)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Selmi (Tun)

Nov 14 – Harare
Zimbabwe 1 (Mahachi 39)
Ethiopia 1 (Nassir 86)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mousa (Nig)

Nov 14 – Cape Coast
Ghana 1 (A. Ayew 33 pen)
South Africa 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** N'Diaye (Sen)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana (P)	6	4	1	1	7	3	13
South Africa	6	4	1	1	6	2	13
Ethiopia	6	1	2	3	4	7	5
Zimbabwe	6	0	2	4	2	7	2

Group H

Nov 11 – Brazzaville
Congo 1 (Mbenza 54)
Namibia 1 (Shalulile 42)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Uwikunda (Rwa)

Nov 11 – Lome
Togo 1 (Cisse 45+1 og)
Senegal 1 (H. Diallo 90+3)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jayed (Mar)

Nov 14 – Thies
Senegal 2 (I. Sarr 14, 24)
Congo 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Duarte (Cpv)

Nov 15 – Johannesburg
Namibia 0
Togo 1 (Placca Fessou 88)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Atcho (Gab)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (P)	6	5	1	0	15	4	16
Togo	6	2	2	2	5	6	8
Namibia	6	1	2	3	5	10	5
Congo	6	0	3	3	5	10	3

Group I

Oct 12 – Rabat
Guinea 1 (Kane 31)
Morocco 4 (El Kaabi 21, Amallah 43, 65, Boufal 89)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Alioum (Cmr)

Nov 12 – Conakry
Guinea 0
Guinea-Bissau 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marouf (Egy)

Nov 12 – Rabat
Sudan 0
Morocco 3 (Mmaee 3, 61, Louza 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Waweru (Ken)

Nov 15 – Marrakesh
Guinea-Bissau 0
Sudan 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ouattara (Bfa)

Nov 16 – Casablanca
Morocco 3 (Mmaee 21 pen, 29, El Kaabi 60)
Guinea 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Bondo (Bot)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco (P)	6	6	0	0	20	1	18
Guinea-Bissau	6	1	3	2	5	11	6
Guinea	6	0	4	2	5	11	4
Sudan	6	0	3	3	5	12	3

Group J

Nov 11 – Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
DR Congo 3 (Kakuta 6, Fasika 66, Malango 85)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Camille (Sey)

Nov 11 – Cotonou
Benin 2 (Dossou 43, Mounie 79)
Madagascar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)

Nov 14 – Kinshasa
DR Congo 2 (Mbokani 10 pen, Malango 74)
Benin 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Otogo-Castane (Gab)

Nov 14 – Antananarivo
Madagascar 1 (Abdallah 75)
Tanzania 1 (Msuva 25)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Nkounkou (Cod)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo (P)	6	3	2	1	9	3	11
Benin	6	3	1	2	5	4	10
Tanzania	6	2	2	2	6	8	8
Madagascar	6	1	1	4	4	9	4

CONCACAF Section

● *3.5 finals places available*

Third Round

Nov 12 – San Pedro Sula
Honduras 2 (Elis 30, Moya 59)
Panama 3 (Waterman 77, Yanis 81, Davis 85)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fischer (Can)

Nov 12 – San Salvador
El Salvador 1 (Roldan 90)
Jamaica 1 (Antonio 82)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Rivera (Pur)

Nov 12 – Edmonton
Canada 1 (David 57)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)

Nov 12 – Cincinnati
United States 2 (Pulisic 74, McKennie 85)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Barton (Slv)

Nov 16 – Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Antonio 22)
United States 1 (Weah 11)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Calderon (Crc)

Nov 16 – San Jose
Costa Rica 2 (Duarte 20, Torres 90+5)
Honduras 1 (Quioto 35)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)

Nov 16 – Panama City
Panama 2 (Waterman 50, Gondola 52)
El Salvador 1 (Henriquez 1)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ortiz (Mex)

Nov 16 – Edmonton
Canada 2 (Larin 45+2, 52)
Mexico 1 (Herrera 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Escobar (Gua)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Canada	8	4	4	0	13	5	16
United States	8	4	3	1	12	5	15
Mexico	8	4	2	2	11	7	14
Panama	8	4	2	2	11	9	14
Costa Rica	8	2	3	3	6	7	9
Jamaica	8	1	4	3	6	10	7
El Salvador	8	1	3	4	4	10	6
Honduras	8	0	3	5	5	15	3

SOUTH AMERICA Section

● *4.5 finals places available*

Nov 11 – Quito
Ecuador 1 (Hincapie 41)
Venezuela 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ferreyra (Uru)

Nov 11 – Asuncion
Paraguay 0
Chile 1 (Silva 56 og)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lostau (Arg)

Nov 11 – Sao Paulo
Brazil 1 (Paqueta 72)
Colombia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)

Nov 11 – Lima
Peru 3 (Lapadula 9, Cueva 31, Pena 39)
Bolivia 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Aquino (Par)

Nov 12 – Montevideo
Uruguay 0
Argentina 1 (Di Maria 7)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Herrera (Ven)

Nov 16 – La Paz
Bolivia 3 (Arce 29, 79, Martins 45)
Uruguay 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)

Nov 16 – Caracas
Venezuela 1 (Machis 52)
Peru 2 (Lapadula 18, Cueva 65)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Arleu (Bra)

Nov 16 – Barranquilla
Colombia 0
Paraguay 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Tello (Arg)

Nov 16 – San Juan
Argentina 0
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Nov 16 – Santiago
Chile 0
Ecuador 2 (Estupinan 9, M. Caicedo 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rapallini (Arg)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil (Q)	13	11	2	0	27	4	35
Argentina (Q)	13	8	5	0	20	6	29
Ecuador	14	7	2	5	23	13	23
Colombia	14	3	8	3	16	17	17
Peru	14	5	2	7	15	20	17
Chile	14	4	4	6	15	16	16
Uruguay	14	4	4	6	14	21	16
Bolivia	14	4	3	7	20	28	15
Paraguay	14	2	7	5	9	18	13
Venezuela	14	2	1	11	9	25	7

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES

Oct 28 – Charlotte
Mexico 2 (Alvarado 6, Rodriguez 59)
Ecuador 3 (Quinonez 2, Corozo 15, Chala 75)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Unkel (USA)

Nov 6 – Washington D.C.
El Salvador 0
Bolivia 1 (Ramallo 72)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Gua)

Nov 10 – Pristina
Kosovo 0
Jordan 2 (Faisal 18, Al Dardoor 86)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jakimovski (Mkd)

Nov 11 – Belgrade
Serbia 4 (Lukic 45+2, Jovic 51, Vlahovic 53, Milinkovic-Savic 83)
Qatar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Peljto (Bih)

Nov 11 – Odessa
Ukraine 1 (Stepanenko 79)
Bulgaria 1 (Kirilov 35)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Kardesler (Tur)

Nov 11 – Managua
Nicaragua 0
Cuba 3 (Reyes 36, Piedra 43, Pozo-Venta 67)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Sandoval (Arg)

Nov 11 – Olomouc
Czech Republic 7 (Barak 26, Pesek 44, 46, Soucek 56, Novak 60, Sykora 83, 88)
Kuwait 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kralovic (Svk)

Nov 14 – Baku
Azerbaijan 2 (Mahmudov 37 pen, 67)
Qatar 2 (Ali 23, 78)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Rumsas (Ltu)

Nov 14 – Managua
Nicaragua 2 (Serapio 6, Galeano 89)
Cuba 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Guzman (Arg)

Nov 15 – Gori
Georgia 1 (Volkovi 41)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Romanov (Ukr)

Nov 15 – Vilnius
Lithuania 1 (Lasickas 54)
Kuwait 1 (Al Otaibi 43)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Anufrijevs (Lva)

Nov 16 – Belek
Afghanistan 1 (Popalzay 85)
Indonesia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ugurlu (Tur)

Nov 16 – Nur-Sultan
Kazakhstan 1 (Zainutdinov 13)
Tajikistan 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kurghkeli (Blr)

Nov 16 – Abu Dhabi
New Zealand 2 (Wood, 36, 66)
Gambia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mohamed (UAE)

Nov 16 – Minsk
Belarus 1 (Yablonskiy 20)
Jordan 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hovhannisyan (Arm)

Club Football
EUROPE

2021-22 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group Stage

Group A

Nov 24 – Manchester
Manchester City 2 (Sterling 63, Jesus 76)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Mbappe 50)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Nov 24 – Brugge
Club Brugge 0
RB Leipzig 5 (Nkunku 12, 90+3, Forsberg 17 pen, 45+1, Silva 26)
HT: 0-4. **Ref:** Massa (Ita)

Dec 7 – Leipzig
RB Leipzig 2 (Szoboszlai 24, A. Silva 71)
Manchester City 1 (Mahrez 76)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Scharer (Sui)

Dec 7 – Paris
PSG 4 (Mbappe 2, 7, Messi 38, 76 pen)
Club Brugge 1 (Rits 68)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Gil Manzano (Spa)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (Q)	6	4	0	2	18	10	12
PSG (Q)	6	3	2	1	13	8	11
RB Leipzig	6	2	1	3	15	14	7
Club Brugge	6	1	1	4	6	20	4

Group B

Nov 24 – Liverpool
Liverpool 2 (Thiago 52, Salah 70)
Porto 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Nov 24 – Madrid
Atletico Madrid 0
Milan 1 (Messias 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vincic (Svn)

Dec 7 – Porto
Porto 1 (Oliveira 90+6 pen)
Atletico Madrid 3 (Griezmann 56, Correa 90, De Paul 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Dec 7 – Milan
Milan 1 (Tomori 29)
Liverpool 2 (Salah 36, Origi 55)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Makkelie (Ned)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (Q)	6	6	0	0	17	6	18
A. Madrid (Q)	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Porto	6	1	2	3	4	11	5
Milan	6	1	1	4	6	9	4

Group C

Nov 24 – Istanbul
Besiktas 1 (Ghezzal 22 pen)
Ajax 2 (Haller 54, 69)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Peljto (Bih)

Nov 24 – Lisbon
Sporting 3 (Pote 30, 39, Porro 81)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Malen 90+3)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Dec 7 – Amsterdam
Ajax 4 (Haller 8 pen, Antony 42, Neres 58, Berghuis 62)
Sporting 2 (Santos 22, Tabata 78)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Massa (Ita)

Dec 7 – Dortmund
Borussia Dortmund 5 (Malen 29, Reus 45+2 pen, 53, Haaland 68, 81)
Besiktas 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Letexier (Fra)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax (Q)	5	5	0	0	16	3	15
Sporting (Q)	5	3	0	2	12	8	9
B. Dortmund	5	2	0	3	5	11	6
Besiktas	5	0	0	5	3	14	0

Group D

Nov 24 – Milan
Internazionale 2 (Dzeko 61, 67)
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hategan (Rou)

Nov 24 – Tiraspol
Sheriff Tiraspol 0
Real Madrid 3 (Alaba 30, Kroos 45+1, Benzema 55)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Dec 7 – Kiev
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Fernando 42)
Sheriff Tiraspol 1 (Nikolov 90+3)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rumsas (Ltu)

Dec 7 – Madrid
Real Madrid 2 (Kroos 17, Asensio 79)
Internazionale 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid (Q)	6	5	0	1	14	3	15
Inter (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Sheriff Tiraspol	6	2	2	3	7	11	7
Shakhtar	6	0	2	4	2	12	2

Group E

Nov 23 – Kiev
Dynamo Kiev 1 (Harmash 70)
Bayern Munich 2 (Lewandowski 14, Coman 42)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Meler (Tur)

Nov 23 – Barcelona
Barcelona 0
Benfica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)

Dec 8 – Munich
Bayern Munich 3 (Muller 34, Sane 43, Musiala 62)
Barcelona 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Hategan (Rou)

Dec 8 – Lisbon
Benfica 2 (Yaremchuk 16, Gilberto 22)
Dynamo Kiev 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern (Q)	6	6	0	0	22	3	18
Benfica (Q)	6	2	2	2	7	9	8
Barcelona	6	2	1	3	2	9	7
Dynamo Kiev	6	0	1	5	1	11	1

Group F

Nov 23 – Villarreal
Villarreal 0
Manchester United 2 (Ronaldo 78, Sancho 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Nov 23 – Bern
Young Boys 3 (Pefok 39, Sierro 80, Hefti 84)
Atalanta 3 (Zapata 10, Palomino 51, Muriel 88)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Siebert (Ger)

Dec 8 – Manchester
Manchester United 1 (Greenwood 9)
Young Boys 1 (Rieder 42)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)

Dec 9 – Bergamo
Atalanta 2 (Malinovskyi 71, Zapata 80)
Villarreal 3 (Danjuma 3, 51, Capoue 42)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd (Q)	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
Villarreal (Q)	6	3	1	2	12	9	10
Atalanta	6	1	3	2	12	13	6
Young Boys	6	1	2	3	7	12	5

Group G

Nov 23 – Seville
Sevilla 2 (Jordan 12, Mir 90+7)
Wolfsburg 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Nov 23 – Lille
Lille 1 (David 31)
Red Bull Salzburg 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Dec 8 – Wolfsburg
Wolfsburg 1 (Steffen 89)
Lille 3 (Yilmaz 11, David 72, Gomes 78)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Dec 8 – Salzburg
Red Bull Salzburg 1 (Okafor 50)
Sevilla 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vincic (Svn)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lille (Q)	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
RB Salzburg (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Sevilla	6	1	3	2	5	5	6
Wolfsburg	6	1	2	3	5	10	5

Group H

Nov 23 – London
Chelsea 4 (Chalobah 25, James 55, Hudson-Odoi 58, Werner 90+5)
Juventus 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Ser)

Nov 23 – Malmo
Malmo 1 (Rieks 28)
Zenit 1 (Rakitskyi 90+2 pen)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lva)

Dec 8 – Saint-Petersburg
Zenit 3 (Claudinho 38, Azmoun 41, Ozdoev 90+4)
Chelsea 3 (Werner 2, 85, Lukaku 62)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Gozubuyuk (Ned)

Dec 8 – Turin
Juventus 1 (Kean 18)
Malmo 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Peljto (Bih)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus (Q)	6	5	0	1	10	6	15
Chelsea (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	4	13
Zenit	6	1	2	3	10	10	5
Malmo	6	0	1	5	1	14	1

2021-22 UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Group Stage

Group A

Nov 25 – Glasgow
Rangers 2 (Morelos 15, 49)
Sparta Prague 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Makkelie (Ned)

Nov 25 – Brondby
Brondby 1 (Uhre 51)
Lyon 3 (Cherki 57, 66, Slimani 76)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)

Dec 9 – Lyon
Lyon 1 (Bassey 49 og)
Rangers 1 (Wright 42)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Petrescu (Rou)

Dec 9 – Prague
Sparta Prague 2 (Hancko 43, Hlozek 49)
Brondby 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pawson (Eng)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon (Q)	6	5	1	0	16	5	16
Rangers (Q)	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Sparta Prague	6	2	1	3	6	9	7
Brondby	6	0	2	4	2	11	2

Group B

Nov 25 – Monaco
Monaco 2 (Volland 28, Fofana 38)
Real Sociedad 1 (Isak 35)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Svk)

Nov 25 – Eindhoven
PSV 2 (Carlos Vinicius 45 pen, Bruma 56)
Sturm Graz 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Raczkowski (Pol)

Dec 9 – San Sebastian
Real Sociedad 3 (Oyarzabal 43 pen, 62, Sorloth 90+3)
PSV 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Dec 9 – Graz
Sturm Graz 1 (Jantscher 7 pen)
Monaco 1 (Volland 30)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Al Hakim (Swe)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monaco (Q)	6	3	3	0	7	4	12
R. Sociedad (Q)	6	2	3	1	9	6	9
PSV	6	2	2	2	9	8	8
Sturm Graz	6	0	2	4	3	10	2

Group C

Nov 24 – Moscow
Spartak Moscow 2 (Sobolev 3 pen, 28)
Napoli 1 (Elmas 64)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Nov 25 – Leicester
Leicester City 3 (Daka 11, Maddison 21, Ndidi 33)
Legia Warsaw 1 (Mladenovic 26)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)

Dec 9 – Naples
Napoli 3 (Ounas 4, Elmas 24, 53)
Leicester City 2 (Evans 27, Dewsbury-Hall 33)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

Dec 9 – Warsaw
Legia Warsaw 0
Spartak Moscow 1 (Bakaev 17)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jug (Svn)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	9	10
Napoli (Q)	6	3	1	2	15	10	10
Leicester City	6	2	2	2	12	11	8
Legia Warsaw	6	2	0	4	4	11	6

Group D

Nov 25 – Frankfurt
E. Frankfurt 2 (Kamada 13, Pacienca 90+4)
Antwerp 2 (Nainggolan 33, Samatta 88)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tierney (Eng)

Nov 25 – Piraeus
Olympiakos 1 (Soares 90)
Fenerbahce 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

Dec 9 – Istanbul
Fenerbahce 1 (Berisha 42)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Sow 29)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Srb)

Dec 9 – Antwerp
Antwerp 1 (Balikwisha 7)
Olympiakos 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Di Bello (Ita)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
E. Frankfurt (Q)	6	3	3	0	10	6	12
Olympiakos (Q)	6	3	0	3	8	7	9
Fenerbahce	6	1	3	2	7	8	6
Antwerp	6	1	2	3	6	10	5

Group E

Nov 25 – Istanbul
Galatasaray 4 (Cicaldau 12, Caleta-Car 30 og, Feghouli 64, Babel 83)
Marseille 2 (Milik 68, 85)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)

Nov 25 – Moscow
Lokomotiv Moscow 0
Lazio 3 (Immobile 56 pen 63 pen, Pedro 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Soares Dias (Por)

Dec 9 – Rome
Lazio 0
Galatasaray 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Dec 9 – Marseille
Marseille 1 (Milik 35)
Lokomotiv Moscow 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray (Q)	6	3	3	0	7	3	12
Lazio (Q)	6	2	3	1	7	3	10
Marseille	6	1	4	1	6	7	7
Lokomotiv	6	0	2	4	2	9	2

Group F

Nov 25 – Herning
Midtjylland 3 (Sviatchenko 2, Isaksen 48, Evander 90+3 pen)
Braga 2 (R. Horta 43, Galeno 85)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Jug (Svn)

Nov 25 – Belgrade
Red Star Belgrade 1 (Ivanic 57)
Ludogorets 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Sanchez Martinez (Spa)

Dec 9 – Razgrad
Ludogorets 0
Midtjylland 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)

Dec 9 – Braga
Braga 1 (Galeno 52 pen)
Red Star Belgrade 1 (Katai 70 pen)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Guida (Ita)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	4	11
Braga (Q)	6	3	1	2	12	9	10
Midtjylland	6	2	3	1	7	7	9
Ludogorets	6	0	2	4	3	8	2

Group G

Nov 25 – Leverkusen
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Andrich 16, 82, Diaby 87)
Celtic 2 (Juranovic 40 pen, Jota 56)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Sidiropouos (Gre)

Nov 25 – Seville
Real Betis 2 (Tello 5, Canales 52)
Ferencvaros 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)

Dec 9 – Glasgow
Celtic 3 (Welsh 3, Henderson 72, Turnbull 78 pen)
Real Betis 2 (Bain 69 og, Iglesias 75)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Stefanski (Pol)

Dec 9 – Budapest
Ferencvaros 1 (Laidouni 82)
Bayer Leverkusen 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Levnikov (Rus)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leverkusen (Q)	6	4	1	1	14	5	13
Real Betis (Q)	6	3	1	2	12	12	10
Celtic	6	3	0	3	13	15	9
Ferencvaros	6	1	0	5	5	12	3

Group H

Nov 25 – Zagreb
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Menalo 35)
Genk 1 (Ugbo 45)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Nyberg (Swe)

Nov 25 – Vienna
Rapid Vienna 0
West Ham 2 (Yarmolenko 40, Noble 45 pen)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)

Dec 9 – Genk
Genk 0
Rapid Vienna 1 (Ljubicic 29)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Martins (Por)

Dec 9 – London
West Ham 0
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Orsic 4)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mariani (Ita)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
West Ham (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	3	13
Dinamo (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	6	7
Rapid Vienna	6	2	0	4	4	9	3
Genk	6	1	2	3	4	10	5

2021-22 UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Group Stage

Group A

Nov 25 – Helsinki
HJK 1 (Tanaka 48)
Alashkert 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Van Driessche (Bel)

Nov 25 – Tel Aviv
Maccabi Tel Aviv 0
LASK 1 (Horvath 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brisard (Fra)

Dec 9 – Yerevan
Alashkert 1 (Boljevic 78)
Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 (Almog 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bogar (Hun)

Dec 9 – Klagenfurt
LASK 3 (Balic 41, Nakamura 63, Gruber 81)
HJK 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pajac (Cro)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LASK (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	1	16
Maccabi (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	4	11
HJK	6	2	0	4	5	15	6
Alashkert	6	0	1	5	4	15	1

Group B

Nov 25 – Tallinn
Flora 1 (Miller 44)
Partizan Belgrade 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Harvey (Irl)

Nov 25 – Nicosia
Anorthosis 1 (Christodoulopoulos 27)
Gent 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Schnyder (Sui)

Dec 9 – Belgrade
Partizan Belgrade 1 (Milovanovic 20)
Anorthosis 1 (Christodoulopoulos 33 pen)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Kruashvili (Geo)

Dec 9 – Gent
Gent 1 (Bruno 51)
Flora 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Sjoberg (Swe)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gent (Q)	6	4	1	1	6	2	13
Partizan (Q)	6	2	2	2	6	4	8
Anorthosis	6	1	3	2	6	9	6
Flora	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

Group C

Nov 25 – Bodo
Bodo/Glimt 2 (Brunstad Fet 25, Botheim 85)
CSKA Sofia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Frid (Isr)

Nov 25 – Rome
Roma 4 (Perez 15, Zaniolo 33, Abraham 46, 75)
Zorya Luhansk 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kovacs (Rou)

Dec 9 – Zaporizhzhia
Zorya Luhansk 1 (Nazaryna 18)
Bodo/Glimt 1 (Vernydub 68 og)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jakubik (Pol)

Dec 9 – Sofia
CSKA Sofia 2 (Catakovic 75, Wildschut 90+3)
Roma 3 (Abraham 15, 53, Mayoral 34)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Walsh (Sco)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Roma (Q)	6	4	1	1	18	11	13
Bodo/Glimt (Q)	6	3	3	0	14	5	12
Zorya Luhansk	6	2	1	3	5	11	7
CSKA Sofia	6	0	1	5	3	13	1

Group D

Nov 25 – Jablonec
Jablonec 1 (Kratochvil 7)
AZ 1 (Evjen 44)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Schuttengruber (Aut)

Nov 25 – Randers
Randers 2 (Kamara 68, Piesinger 76)
CFR Cluj 1 (Deac 72)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Robertson (Sco)

Dec 9 – Alkmaar
AZ 1 (Oosting 87)
Randers 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Farrugia Cann (Mal)

Dec 9 – Cluj
CFR Cluj 2 (Debeljuh 45, 82)
Jablonec 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Osmers (Ger)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ (Q)	6	4	2	0	8	3	14
Randers (Q)	6	1	4	1	9	9	7
Jablonec	6	1	3	2	6	8	6
CFR Cluj	6	1	1	4	4	7	4

Group E

Nov 25 – Haifa
Maccabi Haifa 0
Union Berlin 1 (Ryerson 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ocenas (Svk)

Nov 25 – Prague
Slavia Prague 2 (Olayinka 12, Kuchta 66)
Feyenoord 2 (Dessers 31, 90+3)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)

Dec 9 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord 2 (Dessers 38, Nelson 65)
Maccabi Haifa 1 (David 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Balakin (Ukr)

Dec 9 – Berlin
Union Berlin 1 (Kruse 64)
Slavia Prague 1 (Schranz 50)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Obrenovic (Svn)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord (Q)	6	4	2	0	11	6	14
Slavia (Q)	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Union Berlin	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Maccabi Haifa	6	1	1	4	2	7	4

Group F

Nov 25 – Bratislava
Slovan Bratislava 0
PAOK 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Higler (Ned)

Nov 25 – Gibraltar
Lincoln Red Imps 0
Copenhagen 4 (Johanesson 5, Lerager 7, Boving 63, Hojlund 73)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Jonasson (Isl)

Dec 9 – Thessaloniki
PAOK 2 (A. Zivkovic 17, Schwab 55)
Lincoln Red Imps 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Saggi (Nor)

Dec 9 – Copenhagen
Copenhagen 2 (Wind 30, Hojlund 53)
Slovan Bratislava 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen (Q)	6	5	0	1	15	5	15
PAOK (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	4	11
Slovan Bratislava	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Lincoln Red Imps	6	0	0	6	2	17	0

Group G

Nov 25 – Rennes
Rennes 3 (Laborde 9, 39, 69)
Vitesse 3 (Huisman 43, Buitink 75, Openda 90)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Eskas (Nor)

Nov 25 – Maribor
Mura 2 (Horvat 11, Marosa 90+4)
Tottenham Hotspur 1 (Kane 72)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carvalho Nobre (Por)

Dec 9 – London
Tottenham Hotspur P
Rennes P
HT: N/A. **Ref:** N/A

Dec 9 – Arnhem
Vitesse 3 (Buitink 4, Openda 35, Huisman 40)
Mura 1 (Marosa 82)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Glova (Svk)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rennes (Q)	5	3	2	0	10	7	11
Vitesse	6	3	1	2	12	9	10
Tottenham	5	2	1	2	11	8	7
Mura	6	1	0	5	5	14	3

Group H

Nov 25 – Almaty
Kairat 2 (Vagner Love 23, Hovhannisyan 56)
Basel 3 (Cabral 45 pen, Zhegrova 69, Kasami 73)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Kikacheishvili (Geo)

Nov 25 – Baku
Qarabag 2 (Psaltis 49 og, Andrade 88)
Omonia 2 (Duris 43 pen, Gomez 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Krogh (Den)

Dec 9 – Basel
Basel 3 (Cabral 33, 74, Kasami 62)
Qarabag 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jovic (Cro)

Dec 9 – Nicosia
Omonia 0
Kairat 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nuza (Kvx)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basel	6	4	2	0	14	6	14
Qarabag	6	3	2	1	10	8	11
Omonia	6	0	4	2	5	10	4
Kairat	6	0	2	4	6	11	2

SOUTH AMERICA

2021 COPA LIBERTADORES

Final

Nov 27 – Montevideo
Palmeiras 2 (Veiga 5, Deyverson 95)
Flamengo 1 (Gabriel Barbosa 72)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)
After Extra-Time

2021 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Final

Nov 20 – Montevideo
Athletico Paranaense 1 (Nikao 20)
Red Bull Bragantino 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Matonte (Uru)

CONCACAF

2021 CONCACAF LEAGUE

Semi-Finals 1st Leg

Nov 23 – Guatemala City
Guastatoya 0
Comunicaciones 1 (Lezcano 63)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Herrera (Crc)

Nov 24 – Hamilton
Forge FC 2 (Navarro 83, Awuah 90+3)
Motagua 2 (K. Lopez 43, Pereira 64)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Santander (Mex)

Semi-Finals 2nd Leg

Nov 30 – Guatemala City
Comunicaciones 2 (Anangono 46, Lezcano 63)
Guastatoya 1 (Landin 73)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Villarreal (USA)
Comunicaciones win 3-1 on aggregate

Dec1 – Tegucigalpa
Motagua 0
Forge FC 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Torres (Pur)
2-2 on aggregate. Motagua win on away goals

AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Black Bulls Maputo (C)	26	17	7	2	46	16	58
Ferroviario Beira	26	16	5	5	37	19	53
Songo	26	12	10	4	34	24	46
Ferroviario De Lichinga	26	13	2	11	34	29	41
Costa do Sol	26	10	9	7	27	20	39
Vilanculo	26	10	8	8	32	27	38
Ferroviario Maputo	26	9	10	7	25	17	37
LD Maputo	26	8	10	8	22	19	34
Ferroviario Nacala	26	8	8	10	24	31	32
Ferroviario Nampula (R)	26	8	7	11	19	25	31
Incomati (R)	26	7	7	12	22	29	28
Matchedje de Mocuba (R)	26	5	7	14	20	34	22
Textafrica (R)	26	3	8	15	13	41	17
Desportivo Maputo (R)	26	3	8	15	15	39	17

ASIA

2021 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final

Nov 23 – Riyadh
Al Hilal 2 (N. Al Dawsari 1, Marega 63)
Pohang Steelers 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mohamed (UAE)

BHUTAN

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paro (C)	18	14	3	1	60	11	45
Thimphu City	18	13	4	1	78	17	43
Transport United	18	13	2	3	65	16	41
High Quality United	18	11	1	6	50	23	34
Druk Lhayul	18	10	3	5	34	19	33
Ugyen Academy	18	8	1	9	27	27	25
Tensung	18	6	1	11	18	43	19
GOMO	18	2	1	15	20	59	7
Gelephu	18	2	1	15	16	81	7
Paro Rinpung	18	2	1	15	25	97	7

CAMBODIA

Championship Round Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Phnom Penh Crown (C)	19	13	5	1	54	18	44
Svay Rieng	19	13	3	3	58	26	42
Visakha	19	11	7	1	56	19	40
NagaWorld	19	11	4	4	52	34	37
Boeung Ket	19	11	2	6	30	22	35
Angkor Tiger	19	8	4	7	31	31	28
National Defense	19	6	5	8	25	27	23
Kirivong Sok Sen Chey	19	4	1	14	22	54	13

Relegation Round Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
National Police	16	3	5	8	18	32	14
Asia Euro United	16	4	2	10	30	49	14
Electricite du Cambodge	16	3	4	9	14	44	13
Prey Veng	16	2	5	9	23	30	11
Soltilo Angkor (R)	16	1	5	10	12	39	8

KYRGYZSTAN

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dordoi Bishkek (C)	28	19	5	4	57	27	62
Abdish-Ata	28	17	8	3	66	31	59
Alga	28	17	4	7	38	24	55
Alay	28	13	7	8	45	38	46
Kaganat	28	10	7	11	41	40	37
Neftchi	28	9	4	15	37	44	31
Ilbirs	28	5	2	21	24	54	17
Kara-Balta	28	1	5	22	18	68	8

MONGOLIA

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Athletic 220 (C)	18	13	1	4	42	20	40
Deren	18	11	2	5	32	19	35
Falcons	18	11	2	5	38	24	35
Ulaanbaatar	18	9	6	3	34	16	33
Khaan Khuns-Erchim	18	9	3	6	33	19	30
Ulaanbaatar City	18	9	2	7	42	40	29
Khangarid	18	5	3	10	30	45	18
Lions	18	5	2	11	36	51	17
Khoromkhon	18	5	2	11	31	47	17
UB Mazaalaynuud (R)	18	0	3	15	12	49	3

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Teddy Sheringham

Manchester United 2 Bayern Munich 1

1999 Champions League final, Nou Camp, Barcelona

The 1999 Champions League final was one of the most dramatic of all time – and Teddy Sheringham was right at the heart of it. After coming off the bench, he scored one goal and assisted another as Manchester United sealed an historic treble...

CL winners... Sheringham lifts the trophy with David Beckham

"We knew there wasn't a lot between Bayern and us. We had drawn with them twice and they had already won the league and cup in Germany, so they were playing for the treble as well.

We had our most influential player missing in Roy Keane. We had so many fantastic players, but without Keane we weren't the same. He was our leader and driving force, as he showed against Juventus in the semi-final. We knew we had to be on top of our game for the final.

Bayern started fantastically. They went 1-0 up and could have gone two, three or even four up; they hit the bar, the post, and Peter Schmeichel made some great saves. But when the game stays at 1-0, you always have a chance.

It was a strange dressing room at half-time – there wasn't much said. We had dominant players, but they weren't vocal: Jaap Stam and Ronny Johnsen were big and dominant at centre-half but not vocal; Denis Irwin was ever-present but quiet; David Beckham and Ryan Giggs weren't vocal; Gary Neville always had something to say but he wasn't dominant then because he had senior players above him.

But there was an inner belief. You looked around and thought: "I know he's going to fight until the bitter end to make sure we've got a chance of winning this game."

At half-time, Sir Alex came to me and said: "If we're still losing 1-0 after 15 minutes, you're going on." So I sat there thinking: "Please don't score."

I wanted to be part of the game. I didn't want my team to win without me doing anything – I won't deny that. Then in the final ten minutes we came alive.

When Becks took that first corner, it was getting desperate because Schmeichel had come up. Becks played the ball to the far post. Dwight Yorke tried to help the ball back in. Stefan Effenberg tried to clear it and it went to the edge of the box. I saw it fall to Giggsy on his right foot and I'm thinking: "This could go anywhere."

He scuffed his volley and it came bobbling towards me. I tried to hit it as hard as I can and scuffed it off my ankle past the goalkeeper, and into the goal.

I knew I was onside but as I turned away to celebrate I had to look over my shoulder to make sure the linesman hadn't put his flag up. I saw him with his hands down and went off to celebrate in front of the fans – they were going absolutely nuts. It was like: "Right, this is going to extra-time."

Twenty seconds later, we had another corner. The crowd are going nuts now because they know we're in the final seconds and we've got another chance.

Becks goes across to take it, and now I'm feeling ten feet tall. I'm thinking: "Put that ball wherever you want – I'm going to head it, I'm going to score."

As he put the ball in I got across my man and rose up to head it in the near post, but instinctively I knew I was up a bit too early. People that understand football will know: in that split second you change your mind. I realised that if I head it for goal, it's going to go over the bar, so all I can do is head it into an area at the far post and hope one of my mates is there.

As I flicked it to the far post, I could just see Ole putting it into the roof of the net.

Everyone just exploded. The Bayern end went completely dead; their players were lying on the floor – they just couldn't believe what had happened.

How do you explain it? It's like *Roy of the Rovers* stuff – these things don't happen.

It must have been two minutes of celebrations before we walked back; 20 seconds later, the final whistle went.

> Sir Alex said to me: "If we're still losing 1-0 after 15 minutes, you're going on." So I sat there thinking: "Please don't score"

It was pure ecstasy. Some people ask: "Is scoring a goal better than sex?" I think that night it was."

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